

Department of History  
University of Cape Town

M.A. Thesis

**Miserable Hovels and Shanties on waterlogged wasteland**

**Political-economy of peri-urban squatting around Greater Cape  
Town, Circa 1945-1960**

By

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*"First, events in history are not rational or logical. They rather constitute a dialectical character in their development. To understand the world, we must have a grasp of dialectics"*

*(A.M. Babu)*

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A word of thanks goes to Professor Colin Bundy (now at University of Western Cape) who in the first six months of my M.A. gave critical advice on the theme of my research. Doctor Vivian Bickford-Smith, who took over from him as internal supervisor, made many valuable suggestions on the first draft of this thesis and tenaciously edited the last version. His superb analytical skill is responsible for challenging my earlier prosiac efforts and forcing me to face directly the critical issues. None of my two supervisors, of course, are responsible for my views - and least of all for "Miserable Hovels and Shanties on Waterlogged Wasteland".

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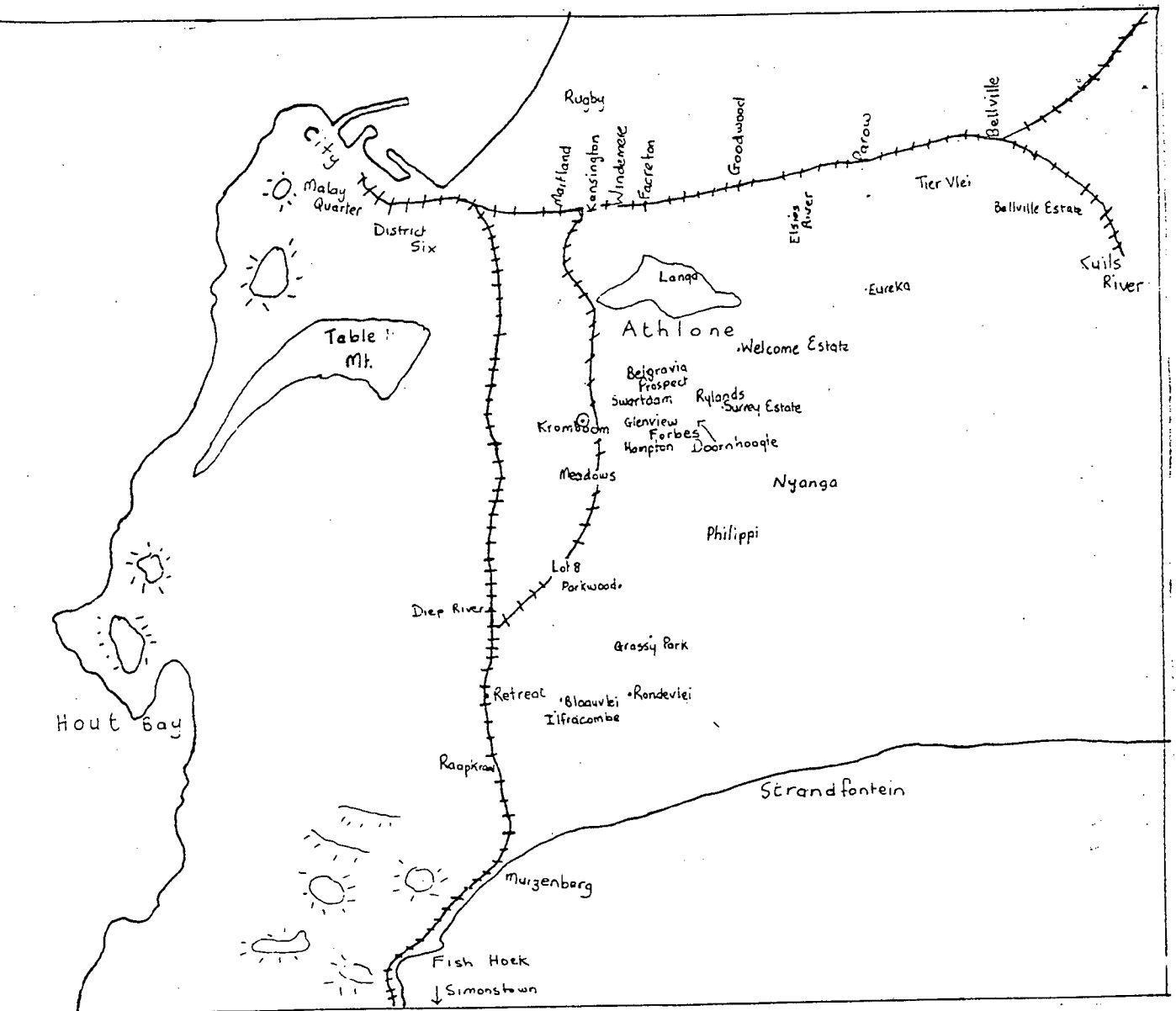
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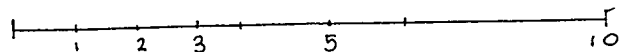
Lastly, I cannot forget to thank my family in Transkei for being a source of encouragement and a point of consolation throughout the years of my studies.

# SKETCH MAP OF GREATER CAPE TOWN,

SHOWING SQUATTER CAMPS, 1939 - 1948.



SCALE :-



MILES.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an intended contribution to the store of historical knowledge on Cape Town. Its title 'Miserable Hovels and Shanties on Waterlogged Wasteland'; political economy of peri-urban squatting in Cape Town, 1945 - 1960, has been decided on the basis of the following facts:

- (i) Very little has been written on this subject especially during the period I have chosen. As a result, a lacuna exists in our understanding of 20th century Cape Town. So this thesis is an effort whose significance and value is that it seeks to provide an account of peri-urban squatting within the framework of political economy. By so doing a wide variety of factors, essential enough to have coloured the epoch, are captured and weaved together.
- (ii) Most historical works have not adequately examined the economic issues which underpin the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting. They have focussed more, instead, on the political aspect, emphasising the unequal distribution of political power between races. Here in this thesis I have attempted to strike a balance between the two factors (political and economic factors), hence I adopted the concept of political economy. To highlight the economic aspect I have used statistical data, (which I do



not claim is entirely accurate) to show the wage levels between races and also expose the pervasive state of underemployment of most Black people, whilst at the same time showing the political aspect through an examination of government legislations. This is contained mostly in chapters two and three.

The working definition of political economy adopted in this thesis is that the term designates the nature of relations and influences that political and economic aspects have on each other, whilst at the same time shaping the fabric of South African society. I have coined this definition in the background of my reading journals on the 'History of Political Economy'. I have listed these journals in the bibliography.

(iii) Peri-urban squatting is still a problem today not only in Cape Town but also around a number of other South African cities. So this thesis is intended not only to highlight an historical perspective to the problem but also indicates in broad terms approaches towards the solution in its conclusions.

Apart from chapter one which is basically a literature review, the two chapters which follow ie, chapters two and three, represent a struggle to establish a comprehensive theoretical perspective in order to examine the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting more adequately. There are obvious problems in weaving together or harmonising a diversity of

factors which are all relevant in the explanation of peri-urban squatting. For instance, it was difficult to make a transition from the more broad issues of political economy of South Africa to the more local specific and concrete issues affecting Cape Town during the period of research.

The chapters that follow go beyond the political and economic factors and focus on conditions of life in squatter camps and forms of cultural activities. The last chapter examines the various responses by the government and local authorities of Cape Town, as well as the wider public to the plight of squatters.

Sources used in this thesis include Minutes of the Mayor of Cape Town, Industrial as well as population censuses, newspapers, oral interviews and secondary literature. All these sources have their peculiar weaknesses but I would like to limit my comments to oral information. The oral information I have used is limited in scope by a number of factors. One of these factors is that the number of people interviewed is small. This is because of the fact that, during the one and a half years of research I had serious problems in terms of access to squatter camps, situated more than twelve miles away from UCT campus. Besides that it was difficult to get people who were not only willing to be interviewed but also relevant to the period under research. Many times I was often interrupted by turmoil in the township

and especially in shack areas. This meant that the interviewing process with only one person would sometimes get prolonged. In addition to that the content of the interviews was also affected by my limited experience, on the one hand and by the age, level of education and other general circumstances on the part of informants, on the other hand. Other problems resided with the formulation of a questionnaire. One is often not aware of the extent to which a question he asks leads to an expected response and the extent to which the whole questionnaire reflects the interviewer's preconceived ideas. But on the whole these factors cannot discount the value of oral information, especially if used to complement secondary sources.

## INTRODUCTION

Just three years ago, Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley in their book, titled 'Reconstructing Archaeology', wrote, "the past is completed and gone, a problem presenting a challenge to the present."<sup>(1)</sup> They postulated the "distance", the "otherness" and the "absence" of the past as the condition of the challenge. Even though the past they referred to as archaeologists is obviously remote, as compared to the fairly recent past of the historian, their point remains fascinating, especially if one is to examine, as an historical phenomenon, peri-urban squatting. It highlights the limitations imposed by the absence of the social totality of factors or wholeness of conditions under which squatting occurred in the past and squatter life was lived. Therefore, many written local histories of squatting bear in them some weaknesses which in the final analysis link directly or indirectly to this point. They cannot bring to the surface every constituent element of squatting. This is not possible so long as the past cannot be reconstructed as it actually was. This thesis also shares the limitations

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1. Shanks, M. and Tilley, C.: Reconstructing Archaeology, Theory and practice, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.9.

implied by these facts. It does not pretend to have covered every aspect of squatting in Cape Town during the set period. It only examines salient elements and offers fairly broad perspectives into them. In that way it becomes an exception from the already existing local histories of squatting. It attempts to present a complete perspective on peri-urban squatting by examining the macro and micro constituent elements of it. All other historical works reviewed in chapter 1 of this thesis, present insightful, detailed and theoreticised analytical perspectives but none of them attempts to complete such perspectives by linking the problem of squatting in South Africa to global economic issues. This thesis attempts this through its examination of issues of imperialism. I am acutely aware of the fact that it remains silent as regards certain questions it raises implicitly. This in fact is a problem, and is based on the fact that peri-urban squatting as an historical phenomenon, is a broad and immense topic. It involves complex macro and micro political and economic issues which are sometimes difficult to harmonise in an historical account. In other words, one can hardly establish an integrated conception of peri-urban squatting which touches every aspect and smoothly escape every critic or criticism.

In this thesis, I have attempted a kind of delimitation which allows the essential elements of squatting to be comprehended. In essence this has involved setting and

clearly defining parameters or underlying theoretical assumptions. In that light, the thesis embodies an examination of peri-urban squatting grounded on a theoretical note which argues that the emergence and growth of this phenomenon was caused not only by a racist socio-political system but by certain structural contradictions which permeated the development of capitalism in this country. Of course, to unpack the materials of this theoretical note hardly proceeds without polemical excesses. That is why the thesis, in order to contain some of the theoretical issues it raises, locates the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting within an account of the political economy of South Africa. In the context of that account, the political economy of Cape Town is also examined. The origins, development and forms of squatting around Cape Town are all understood from this perspective.

The thesis proceeds to examine specific squatter communities and delves into the social fabric of their lives. In that way, 'the material structures of everyday life',<sup>(1)</sup> and the lived experiences of squatters are unveiled.

To tap the subjective experiences and concrete conditions of

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1. Edwards, I.L. : "Mkhumbane our home", African shanty town society in Cato Manor Farm, 1946 - 1960', (Phd Thesis, Natal University, 1989), p.1.

these people, I have used oral interviews. Voices which cannot be heard in the City Council records or city newspapers, yet appear in court records, more often in defensive mode, can very clearly be heard, in confident tone in transcripts of oral memories. (1)

"With oral history, relations between parents and children, husbands and wives, household routine, experiences of childhood, schooling and private leisure activities can be gauged". (2) More and above that, the subjective feel of class experience can be reconstructed through oral testimony. (3) But this does not mean that oral evidence is devoid of limitations as with any other source material. These are based largely on the subjectivity of informants, changing moods, the varying quality of memory as well as the danger of antiquarianism. (4) In other words, even though oral history may allow for the uncovering of the nature of life of

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1. Jeppie, S. :- 'Aspects of popular culture and class expression in Inner Cape Town, Circa. 1939-1959', (MA. Thesis, UCT, 1990), p.4.
2. Ibid., p.16.
3. Nasson, B. :- 'The oral historian and historical formation in Cape Town' in Studies in the History of Cape Town, (Vol. 6, 1988), pp.13-24.
4. Thompson, P. :- The voice of the Past, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.) (Cited in Jeppie, S., p. 16)

a people or community, within its very practice, as Edwards argues, "lies no radical academic outlook which allows people, i.e. the subjected and oppressed, to speak the truth in ways which allow for enhanced links between intellectuals and subjects".<sup>(1)</sup> Raphael Samuels argues correctly when he says that oral evidence should make the historian more hungry for documents, "not less and when he finds them he can use them in a more ample and varied fashion than his sedentary colleagues".<sup>(2)</sup> This means that oral testimony ought not to supplant but to coexist and engage with other, more traditional sources.<sup>(3)</sup> The way oral information has been used in this thesis takes into cognizance all these points.

Interviews used in this thesis are those collected by the Western Cape Oral History Project. They are all life histories and very few of them focus specifically on squatting and squatters. To a considerable extent, testimonies on matters affecting squatters, appear incidentally in other interviews. The rich incidental occurrence of such testimonies has served in very important ways the role of a stimulant in the interrogation of

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1. Edwards, I.L. : "'Mkhumbane our home'", p.3.
2. Samuels, Raphael :- 'Local History and Oral History',  
History Workshop Journal, 1, (Spring 1976), p.204.
3. Nasson, Bill :- 'The oral historian' in Studies, Vol. 6,  
1988, pp.13-24.



documentary sources for verification.

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At this juncture I want to proceed and explain reasons for choosing the set period (1945 to 1960) as parameters of the research. First and foremost, the period 1945 to 1960 is a very interesting one in South Africa's economic history precisely because "it witnessed a series of significant shifts in the nature and forms of capitalist accumulation and class struggle"<sup>(1)</sup> where the tactics of the State were a key consideration. It was the aftermath of World War II, a period of massive African migration to the cities and was characterised by the rapid consolidation of industrial capitalism. The conflict between state, capital and labour during this period influenced in remarkable ways the spatial structure of most South African cities. Cape Town, in particular, experienced this due to the rapid emergence of Black working-class communities on her margins. A number of peri-urban squatter settlements during this period increased. This was indicated in the letter pages and comments of newspapers like the Cape Times and the Argus. The Cape Argus, 1945, for instance, reported the chaotic overcrowding on the Cape Flats, "pondokkies going up like mushrooms."<sup>(1)</sup> These were erected by 'natives' who were pouring into the Peninsula

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1. Jeppie, S. :- 'Aspects of popular culture and class expression in Inner Cape Town', p.4.

2. Cape Argus, 17/05/1945.

to look for work, unable to find accommodation, and therefore erecting pondokkies willy-nilly on anybody's land. In the Cape Times this was reported as "native invasion of Cape Town".<sup>(1)</sup> As a result of this, after 1948, in the 1950s especially, there was a tightening up of influx control measures instigated by the new Nationalist Party government as well as Coloured Labour Preference Policy. (See page 84)

The 1950s also witnessed a pattern of legislations, specifically affecting the Africans, which were an indication of a general refusal to recognise them as part of a permanent urban population (see chapter 3). All these legislations and influx control measures, ignored reality and resulted in an increase of the number of squatters. Hence in May 1948, recognising the housing shortage, the reluctance of magistrates to order the eviction of homeless Africans, and the various forms of resistance by the squatters to eviction (or endorsement out of the city), the local authorities decided to allow "Native squatting to take place on approved sites".<sup>(2)</sup>

Conditions of life in these camps were appalling and after 1945 they increasingly became the focus of public attention. A number of voluntary welfare organisations, for instance the

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1. Cape Times, 14/03/1945.

2. Cape Times, 01/05/1948.

Cape Flats Distress Association or Friends of Windermere Association, played an important role during this period, to alleviate conditions in squatter camps. They also assisted in putting pressure on the local authorities of Cape Town to attend to the plight of squatters. Hence in the late 1950s, with the phasing out of certain squatter camps, a number of locations were developed eg. Nyanga West, presently known as Gugulethu.

To the Black working-class at large, the period was one of stress and complete dehumanisation especially to those who lived as squatters on the margins of urban society. Having to sustain themselves in a context which was both degrading and exploitative they developed a culture which combined features of both "a working-class town and an African village".<sup>(1)</sup> Taking from that culture, they were able to eke out their existence even though the margins of survival in a white city were ever narrowing. They were able to sustain themselves during this period of harsh adversity.

Unfortunately very little has been written on the local history of squatting in Cape Town during this period. In fact the local history of squatting in general, is one area which is still lacking adequate attention in established historical

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1. Silk, A. :- A Shanty Town in South Africa; the story of Modderdam, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1981), p. 9

work. A comprehensive review of existing literature on the local history of squatting should definitely show that the field of squatting still needs more attention in terms of academic research. But most of all the literature review in chapter one will also provide an understanding of how various authors examine questions of origins, form and development of peri-urban squatting in South Africa. A clear examination of their various contributions serves as a starting-off point for this thesis.

The trend of thought followed in this thesis is clearly shown by the sequence of chapters. Besides chapter 1 which basically surveys through the existing literature, pointing out important themes, the thesis comprises the following chapters:

**chapter 2 -Issues of the political economy of South Africa**

This chapter, besides attempting to periodise South African post-war economy, examines the nature of accumulation in the post-war period. In this respect, the analysis has implications for political-economic interpretations of the relationship between the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting and the broader system of apartheid capitalism. In other words, the chapter argues that the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting is closely tied up with questions of political, economic power and profit maximization in post-war manufacturing. These are linked with the more broad issues of imperialism. This approach which encompasses broader issues

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has not been attempted in any of the existing local histories of squatting in Cape Town.

**Chapter 3 - Some issues of the political economy of Cape Town**

The tendency of all historically grounded studies of the South African economy is pre-occupation with economy on a national scale. This chapter attempts to move away from that tendency by giving attention to the spatial allocation of economic activity and regional activity. Hence it endeavours to provide an overview of the changing political economy of Cape Town and the shifting material base of working-class experience from the beginning of World War II to the end of the 1950s. The chapter explains the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting in the light of the changing qualities of Cape Town's political economy in order to further particularise the arguments in chapter 2. Thus the nature of productive relations and aspects of working class reproduction are addressed.

**Chapter 4 - Squatter settlements**

The chapter focuses on squatting sites which were in existence during the period of this research. It examines their location, their composition and internal organisation. A comparison, however brief, is made with other squatter movements in the Transvaal.

**Chapter 5 - Issues of health among the squatter communities**

The chapter starts with an analysis of the conditions of life in which squatters lived. It demonstrates how their impoverished state reflected in their lack of basic urban

services, reduced their disease resistance. The chapter lists the various diseases which were prevalent amongst these communities and concludes that the health system cannot be separated from the totality of social and productive relations.

#### **Chapter 6 - Some aspects of culture among the squatters**

The chapter deals with the cultural activities amongst the various squatter communities. It explains how these activities helped to build a people on the margins of urban society into a community or communities. Taking from their culture, they were able to survive the harsh adversities of squatter life.

#### **Chapter 7 - Reactions of the wider community**

The chapter examines the various perceptions of the plight of squatters and actions which followed. It also focuses on actions of concern by various welfare bodies and organisations. It also examines the changes of approach on the part of the central government, after 1948, to the issue of housing and the situation of squatters.

#### **Conclusions**

The thesis concludes that the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting is a magnifying glass through which the harsh realities of land dispossession on the part of an indigenous people, racial injustices, conflict of labour and capital, are neatly exposed. The phenomenon of peri-urban squatting also gives testimony about the evils embedded in the

capitalist mode of production, i.e., obsessive concern with production and ever increasing profits to the detriment of human life and safety. The thesis also indicates the need for political democracy, and more radical change in social and economic matters in order to change the situation of those living in slums and pondokkies today.

## CHAPTER 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines articles and unpublished theses dealing with the subject of squatting during the period after World War II to the 1960s. It begins with an examination of local histories of squatting focusing on areas outside Cape Town and then proceeds to select those histories whose area of focus is Cape Town during the set period.

One of the most interesting works on squatting, which is examined first, is a Phd. thesis by Ian Edwards. It is titled ' "Mkhumbane our home"; African shanty town society in Cato Manor Farm, 1945 to 1960'. It is undoubtedly one of the most thoroughgoing works ever written on this subject. Of course, it took almost more than a decade of research and writing to finish it. But, apart from its brilliant insights, Edwards' work is also replete with problems and only those which help orientate the direction of thoughts contained by this thesis are examined. Most of the problems are clearly conceptual or theoretical in nature. Edwards heavily theoreticises his evidence to the extent that it becomes difficult to grasp the simple essence of the life of Mkhumbane shackland society. Besides that, deducing from the theoretical language he uses, one is led into grouping Ian Edwards with a particular trend



of Marxist thought which could be designated a post-Marxist analytical strand. Its problem is mainly that, while it fetishises the notions of 'class and class struggle' in history, it also holds undefined but clearly romantic conceptions of ideology and culture. These problems permeate through Edwards' work. In his thesis a number of debatable notions like 'class', 'class struggle', 'proletarian consciousness', 'political culture', 'state and capital' are used without prior definition or explanation. It is not because one is preoccupied with definitions rather obsessively but definitions are sometimes crucial to the way questions are posed, and hence the answers that are supplied.<sup>(1)</sup> In fact most local histories of squatting reviewed in this chapter share this same problem. They lack a clear definitional starting point of key concepts. As a result when one examines some of these works, one is often trapped in a network of ambivalence which makes it difficult to grasp the essence of the history of the squatter communities portrayed. To avoid that, in this thesis I have attempted to give brief explanations of such key concepts as political-economy, culture, health, squatting, etc.

The most central theme in Edwards' work as he puts it concerns matters of "political power and social

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1. Bond. P. : Commanding Heights and Community Control; new economics for a new South Africa, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1991), p.31.

transformation".<sup>(1)</sup> His study of Mkhumbane shackland society develops these themes and analyses the nature of relations within the shack community and between it and established authorities. This pattern of thought has also influenced the structure of the two last chapters of this thesis, eg. chapter 6 looks at relations within the squatter communities themselves and chapter 7 examines relations between these communities and the local and central authorities. But Edwards goes beyond that and examines the relations between shack dwellers whom he chooses to call the 'African proletariat', and political organisations. This I have not done in this thesis because it was not intended by the research, secondly in the light of available evidence, there was hardly any indication of squatter political organisations or activities. The reasons for this are indicated throughout the thesis especially in chapters 3 and 4 where the precarious position of squatters in Cape Town is elaborated.

Dealing with an organised shanty town settlement in Cato Manor Farm, Edwards had the advantage of raising a wide range of important themes. The most interesting one to me concerns what Edwards calls, "proletarian consciousness", its social roots and challenge to established authority.<sup>(2)</sup> Basically this constitutes the first chapter of part one of his thesis.

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1. Edwards, I.L. : "Mkhumbane our home", p.3.

2. Ibid., p.11.

In this section Edwards introduces the concept 'New Africa' which was "partly a rubic employed to refer to the proletarian consciousness of the later 1940s".<sup>(1)</sup> This form of consciousness, as Edwards argues, was founded on "an invigorating ideology, the feeling of and a desire for a 'New Africa'".<sup>(2)</sup> The 'New Africa' ideology of the later 1940s, as Edwards puts it, "was created in the factories and the African residential areas".<sup>(3)</sup> In character, the ideology was not well developed, literate or coherent yet it was able "to provide various people with a vitalising new consciousness".<sup>(4)</sup> It is actually on that score that Edwards' argument becomes slippery. In reality it is difficult to imagine how an inchoate ideology can unite people in a political class struggle against established authorities. Secondly, in unveiling the social roots or the origins of this ideology, Edwards is fairly superficial. To trace the origins of this rather invisible ideology only to the 1920 struggles of the ICU, the factories and African residential areas is not enough. Edwards ignores the fact that, usually the way people look at themselves as a group also influences the making of their ideology or ideologies. So Edwards does not show the extent to which Mkhumbane shack dwellers, by

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1. Edwards, I.L. : "'Mkhumbane our home'", p.11.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.12.

4. Ibid.

looking at themselves as Black people living in poor conditions in a white dominated city might have influenced the vision of the 'New Africa' ideology. Besides that Edwards argues that Mkhumbane shackland residents, especially "the African entrepreneur based in Durban"<sup>(1)</sup> had close rural connections. If that was the case, one wonders whether the 'New Africa' ideology was not in any way mediated by tribal cultures or traditional values of the various groups in the shanty town. Edwards is remarkably silent on these issues and he clearly avoids putting weight on issues like tribe, tribal culture or race in the same way he does on the notions of class, class struggle, political culture etc. This shows that his notion of contradictions is either limited or he is selective in his exposition of the past. One cannot accede to the fact that ethnic unity expressed in the 'New Africa' ideology was in reality accomplished in Mkhumbane without romanticising the history of the community. Of course Edwards successfully shows internal divisions and conflicts in the shack society but he consistently minimises them by emphasising that all residents believed "in the need for proletarian unity".<sup>(2)</sup>

Edwards also examines the internal economy of the shack

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1. Edwards, I.L. : "'Mkhumbane our home'", p.60.

2. Ibid., p.9.

society. He portrays it as comprising a diversity of activities. "From the selling of passes often supplied from pick pockets operating on the busses to and from Mkhumbane, the making of leather belts, the collecting and selling of empty 'white man's liquor bottles', the dagga networks extending to Pondoland and northern Zululand, to fruit, vegetable and cooked meat vendors, to the shack shops and ubiquitous shebeens".<sup>(2)</sup> This is one interesting area I have only mentioned in passing in the fourth chapter of this thesis. It definitely needs more thorough examination especially in the Cape Town squatter situation of the late 1940s and 1950s.

~~X~~ Lastly, other local histories of squatting, as will be shown in this chapter, give special attention to factors which pushed people out of the reserves. Amongst these factors, most writers have emphasised land dispossession, droughts, disease and strife or labour conditions in white farms. Edwards denies that these factors underpinned in important ways causes of African migration from the countryside to Durban or to Mkhumbane. As he puts it, "many of the African families who moved to Mkhumbane from the middle 1940s onwards did not do so as a result of rural pestilence and disease or of cattle, land or crop shortages or because of changing

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1. Edwards, I.L. : "Mkhumbane our home", p.9.

2. Ibid., p.67.

labour conditions on farms".<sup>(1)</sup> He unconvincingly emphasises an alternative view. As he puts it, "many people were forced to vacate the countryside as a result of the activities of African entrepreneurs based in Durban".<sup>(2)</sup> It is not clear exactly how this happened and the extent to which it correctly captures the general trend of African migration from the countryside to Durban.

In this thesis I do not intend to examine peri-urban squatting from a deeply sophisticated theoretical point of view. What I do instead is to unveil the life of squatters, factors underlying peri-urban squatting around Cape Town, in fairly simple ways. Most of all the thesis seeks to unveil squatters as true human beings, with moments of joy and sadness, not merely instruments of a political class struggle.

Another interesting piece of work is an article written by Phillip Bonner. The article is entitled, "The Politics of Black Squatter Movements on the Rand, 1944 to 1952". It offers some of the most rigorously analytical perspectives into the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting. Besides identifying various squatter movements around the Rand, Bonner's article examines the structure and organisation of these movements.

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1. Edwards, I.L. :- "Mkhumbane our home", p.60
  2. Ibid.

He also examines concrete experiences and conditions of life in squatter camps. Most importantly he focusses on relationships amongst the squatters themselves, relations with established authorities as well as political organisations. He also describes how squatter movements were able to survive against the will of city authorities.

The squatter movements Bonner identifies in his article, were led by James Mpanza and Harry Mabuya in Johannesburg and Benoni, in 1944 and 1945; Edward Khumalo and Abel Ntoi near Orlando in 1946, and then a number of lesser movements in Johannesburg and Alexandra led by Oriel Monongoaha, Samuel Kgoma and Schreiner Baduza.<sup>(1)</sup> He characterises these movements as highly heterogenous in their composition. As he puts it, "the records for the Tent Town squatter camp in Benoni, for example, reveal places of origin for inhabitants from all over South Africa most of whom were neither born on the Witwatersrand nor had spent a long time in the town. The same was true of each of the squatter camps which sprang up at this time".<sup>(2)</sup> He also categorises squatters into two

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1. Bonner, P. : 'The politics of Black squatter movements in the Rand, 1944-1952', (Unpublished Paper Presented at the 12th biennial National Conference of South African Historical Society, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1989), p.6.

2. Ibid., p.7.

groups, ie. those who were subtenants, eg. in Pimville, and those in white small holdings in the peri-urban areas eg. Brackpan.<sup>(1)</sup> Most squatter movements that spread all over Johannesburg at the end of World War II were of the latter category.

Squatter politics during this period according to Bonner, centred around the issue of land acquisition in order to build shack communities. Therefore the organisation and structure of squatter political movements was geared towards ensuring the attainment of this ideal. Squatters were mobilised behind a leadership which had certain qualifications to lead them to "a promised land" ie., land on which to squat.<sup>(2)</sup> Hence bravery tested in the struggle against white domination was an important attribute when choosing a leader. Besides that, a leader was expected to demonstrate an ability to ensure order in his camp as well as safeguard its self-sustenance. The ability of squatter leaders to match these qualities made them the ultimate sources of authority in the camps. "The social adjudication and social policing carried out by the squatter leaders provided them with a tremendous fund of moral and political

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1. Bonner, P. : 'The politics of Black squatter movements in the Rand, 1944-1952', p.7.

2. Ibid., p.5.

3. Ibid.



authority".<sup>(1)</sup> Unfortunately the political leadership of most squatter leaders was extra-ordinarily personalised and as a result squatter political movements, often conflicted with established political organisations. Some organisations eg the Communist Party of South Africa, were critical of the authority or command most squatter leaders asserted over their followers.

Bonner also analyses family patterns and conditions of marriage in squatter camps. He describes most marriages amongst squatters as "unstable and often transient" as they were only a matter of convenience.<sup>(2)</sup> To secure a place in a municipally controlled squatter camp, a man or a woman had to be living in married circumstances.<sup>(3)</sup> The cost involved in these circumstances became expressed in the brokenness of family life among squatters hence one of the principal sources of crime became juvenile delinquency and youth gangs. According to Bonner, they became an increasingly disturbing phenomenon all over the Rand.<sup>(4)</sup>

Besides that Bonner's article also sheds important insights

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1. Bonner, P. : 'The politics of Black squatter movements in the Rand, 1944-1952', p.13.
2. Ibid., p.9.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.10

into the conditions of life within the squatter camps. He describes the character of these settlements and the implications for the health of the people who lived in them. Mostly made of "sacks and cupboards", Bonner argues, these dwellings offered little protection against disease, sickness and death.<sup>(1)</sup> This is a very important point which this thesis also makes and elaborates in chapter 5.

Lastly, Bonner examines conflicts within squatter communities in the Rand. He isolates and analyses issues related to ethnicity, gangsterism and divisions or splits. These are important issues especially if one takes the notion of contradiction seriously in his understanding of a community. It is unfortunate that Edwards' pioneering work lacks an adequate examination of these issues around Durban. This is a theme which one should examine, especially if one has the advantage of dealing with organised and settled squatter communities.

Bonner posits that a more circular and indeed mercenary element had crept into the politics of squatters around the Rand.<sup>(2)</sup> Divisions among squatter leaders occurred over the collection and distribution of money in the camps and as a

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1. Bonner, P. : 'The politics of Black squatter movements in the Rand, 1944-1952', p.12

2. Ibid.

result a gangster element was imported into the running of the camps. This element, rooted in the power struggles of the squatter leaders, created in-group hostilities of a remarkable character. Unfortunately, these hostilities, the squatter leaders mobilised against each other along ethnic or tribal lines.

I have not been able to isolate these kinds of tensions among squatters in Cape Town, firstly because of the character and composition of squatter settlements in the area. Some of these points are highlighted in chapter 4.

Undoubtedly Bonner's article offers the most insightful perspectives into the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting around Johannesburg. But there are certainly some areas he leaves untouched. One of these concerns religion among the squatters. Religion is an important rallying point especially amongst the communities of the oppressed people. Where Bonner mentions the issue of religion, it is hardly elaborated whereas it is necessary to do so in order to give a fairly balanced picture of the culture of squatters.

A.W. Stadler has also presented an interesting article on peri-urban squatting. The article is titled, 'Birds in the Cornfield: squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944 to 1947'. Some of the areas examined in the article are covered in Bonner's article but the difference is that the central

themes that form the focus of analysis are clearly indicated. Besides that, even though Stadler's article covers a short period, it touches on broad issues related to capitalism in this country. Stadler focuses on issues such as wages, employment and subsistence costs in Johannesburg. He links them with what he calls "a crisis on land which impelled a number of African families to move to industrial areas".<sup>(1)</sup> He demonstrates how these combined with "political disabilities of Blacks"<sup>(2)</sup> and resulted in the growth of squatter settlements. In other words, Stadler's article explains squatter movements as "a response to the economic and social upheavals of the Second World War".<sup>(3)</sup> In a way, Stadler suggests the notion of political-economy as central to an explanation of origins and growth of peri-urban squatting. Likewise the notion of political-economy is at the core of my explanation of peri-urban squatting in Cape Town.

Like Bonner, the various squatter movements upon which his article focuses include Mpanza's squatter movement in

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1. Stadler, A.W. : 'Birds in the Cornfield: squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947', in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Labour, Township and Protest: Studies in social history of the Witwatersrand, (Johannesburg, 1979), p.94.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.

Orlando, Schreiner Baduza's squatters in Lombardy East, Monongoaha's group in South West corner of Orlando and Edward Khumalo's group at Volkshaven.<sup>(1)</sup> In his analysis of structure and organisation of these squatter movements, Stadler moves along similar lines as Bonner. He emphasises the role of squatter leaders in the life of the squatter settlements. But unlike Bonner, Stadler focuses on the period after 1948, a period during which "the balance of forces changed in a direction which made squatting more difficult".<sup>(2)</sup> He examines the entire phenomenon of controlled squatter camps and demonstrates how it changed the character of squatter movements in Johannesburg and broke the power of squatter leaders. As he puts it, under the scheme of 'controlled' camps, land and services were made available to thousands of squatter families who only had to pay a composite fee of fifteen shillings per month.<sup>(3)</sup> These measures went hand in hand with the attack on squatter leadership. They also coincided with a general shift in economic and political conditions which in the end destroyed not only the power of squatter leaders but also put the entire movement on the decline.

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1. Stadler, A.W. : 'Birds in the Cornfield: squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947', p.94.

2. Ibid., p.104.

3. Ibid., p.101.

The main weakness in Stadler's article is that it hardly leads one into the core of daily experiences and life of squatters in the camps. It lacks elaborated perspective into issues like culture or leisure activities, health, etc. These are important issues in order to understand the full meaning of life the squatters lived. I focus on these issues in this thesis.

Besides the works reviewed above, there are several other interesting works on the subject of squatting, focusing specifically on Cape Town. I have selected for purposes of this thesis such works by Budow, M., Swart, C.C., Kinkead-Weeks, B. and Muthiene, Y.

I will begin by examining a mini-thesis written by Budow. It is titled 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town, 1939 to 1948'. In this thesis Budow focuses more specifically on the causes of peri-urban squatting, identifies specific squatter communities and examines the reaction of the city authorities to squatting. In her examination of the causes of squatting around Cape Town, Budow isolates general causes of squatting and proceeds to examine the more local and specific causes of squatting in Cape Town. This trend of thought has greatly influenced the approach used in this thesis. As I indicated earlier, this thesis in its examination of peri-urban squatting, moves from broad to more specific issues.

To elaborate the general trend exhibited by squatting in Cape Town, Budow demonstrates how it reflected the wider social order.<sup>(1)</sup> As she puts it, "the phenomenon of squatting emerged at one time or another in almost all countries with the advent of industrialisation and the resultant drift to towns".<sup>(1)</sup> The failure to absorb incoming migrants resulted in city slums and when this form of accommodation exceeded its limits, the migrants, using their own initiatives erected their own temporary accommodation on vacant land, whether it belonged to the government or was privately owned.<sup>(2)</sup> This according to Budow, marked the beginning of squatting. She argues that this same process manifested itself in many parts of the world during the time of industrialisation eg. in Britain, Europe, America, in Third World countries and in South Africa as well.<sup>(3)</sup>

But Budow also recognises the fact that even though squatting in South Africa and in Cape Town specifically, reflected "a worldwide historical process of city evolution", there are some peculiar trends reflecting the racial discriminatory basis of the society. To elaborate some of these trends,

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1. Budow, M. :- 'Urban squatting in greater Cape Town, 1939-1948', (B.A. Hons. History, UCT, 1976), p.5.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Budow uses as her starting point, the notion of colonial conquest and extensive occupation of land. As she puts it, "it was the policies of colonial governments and successive Union governments thereafter, that provided in part 'the push' to the towns".<sup>(1)</sup> 'The pull' factors Budow mentions were linked to the development of industry in major centres of South Africa. These created a demand for labour providing the employment and cash payments. In the City of Cape Town, it was "insufficient housing in locations, failure of employers to house their workers and attempts to evade influx control measures, which were more stringently applied as the years progressed", which forced many Africans to erect temporary structures for squatting.<sup>(2)</sup> She mentions a number of these settlements which she terms 'black spots' which were in existence that time. Without offering an elaborate perspective on the life and experiences of people in different squatting sites, Budow proceeds to examine responses of the authorities. She examines the conflicts between the local and central authorities and shows how they allowed chances for the phenomenon of peri-urban squatting to grow. I incorporated part of the insights shed on this issue in chapter 7 of this thesis.

According to Budow, the central government sought to absolve

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1. Budow, M. :- 'Urban squatting in greater Cape Town', p.7.

2. Ibid., p.14.

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itself, thus putting the blame on local authorities for failing to address the situation of squatters whereas the latter blamed the central government for limited powers and economic resources. But Budow clearly reveals the insincerity of both claims by the local authorities and the central government.

The reaction of the wider community of Cape Town to the plight of squatters, according to Budow, varied between those who sought to alleviate it and those who wanted to exploit the situation.<sup>(1)</sup> The former organised themselves into welfare organisations like Cape Flats Distress Association whereas the latter were constituted mainly by land companies involved in the hire purchase sale of land to the squatters.

Even though the focus of Budow's thesis is fairly narrow, she manages to unveil all the important points highlighted above. What I do in this thesis is to broaden some of the points already made in her thesis eg. issues like health, community and culture.

Another interesting mini-thesis on peri-urban squatting was written by C.C. Swart. It is titled 'Windermere, from peri-urban area to suburb (1920 to 1950s)'. It focuses on the largest squatter area in the Cape Peninsula. Swart examined

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1. Budow, M. :- 'Urban squatting in greater Cape Town', p.57.

the development of Windermere prior to 1949, conditions and character of the settlement and lastly the changes in the policy of the government with regard to housing.

He ascribes the development of Windermere to "the increasing urbanisation which Cape Town, like cities elsewhere in South Africa, experienced between the 1920s and the 1950s".<sup>(1)</sup> This urbanisation, Swart argues, "was the consequence on the one hand, of an increasing number of people losing access to, or ability to subsist from, land in the countryside; and, on the other, the development of industries, particularly from World War II onwards".<sup>(2)</sup> This coincided with shortages in housing in the city. She also makes an important point which I have taken up and elaborated in detail in this thesis. This is about the inadequacy of wages received by most people, especially Africans. In view of that "many could not afford accommodation in the city and were forced to squat upon the periphery in Windermere".<sup>(3)</sup> The manner in which established authorities reacted to this also served to increase the immensity of the problem. Influx control legislation failed to bring any solution as the problem of squatting escalated.

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1. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from peri-urban area to suburb (1920s to 1950s)', (BA Hons Thesis, UCT, 1983), p.85.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Swart analyses "the responses of the authorities, local and central, to Windermere and the effect of these responses upon the area".<sup>(1)</sup> She demonstrates the changes in government policy which took place after 1948 and how they helped to break the "housing policy impasse".<sup>(2)</sup> Some of the points mentioned by Swart on this issue, are restated and extended in chapter 7 of this thesis.

Swart also examines the life of the shack community of Windermere. She indicates the cultural institutions which existed and their role in developing community spirit in Windermere. She identifies the various churches and schools in the area and elaborates their social function. Lastly, she focuses on the redevelopment of Windermere to a point where it came to be called a 'Coloured' residential suburb.

Swart's work shares most of the strengths and weaknesses identified with other local histories of squatting. The weaknesses are not only related to conceptual issues but also involve a lack of carefully integrated broad perspectives based on a comparative analysis of Windermere and other squatter sites of the same size or age, may be outside Cape Town. In this thesis, what I have attempted to do, is to

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1. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from peri-urban area to suburb' p.(ii).
2. Ibid.

focus on certain specific squatter camps (though not as exhaustive as Swart), and compare conditions of life, drawing these ultimately into a broad framework of analysis ie. political-economy (see chapter 5).

Another interesting paper on the subject of squatting in Cape Town was presented by Yvonne Muthien to a conference on South Africa in the 1950s at Oxford University in 1987. The paper is titled 'Pass controls and squatting in Cape Town during the 1950s'. It focuses largely on "pass control practices, the material conditions of urban labour reproduction and state strategies to control the condition of urban labour reproduction in the Cape Peninsula during the 1950s".<sup>(1)</sup> Most importantly, the paper, besides providing detailed analysis of influx control, labour bureaux system, introduction of pass books and the Coloured Labour Preference Policy, touches on the issue of wages paid to 'native' workers in Cape Town. It demonstrates how low Black wages were to meet urban subsistence costs. As Muthien puts it, "the urban wages was, in effect, a 'single' wage insufficient to meet the high costs of transport, rent and food after World War II".<sup>(2)</sup> All these factors, added together and exacerbated the problem of

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1. Muthien, Y. : 'Pass controls and squatting in Cape Town during the 1950s', (Paper presented to a Conference on South Africa in the 1950s, Oxford University, 1987), p.2.

2. Ibid., p.1.

squatting around the City of Cape Town. In this way, Muthien, like Stadler and others, subtly suggest the centrality of the notion of political-economy when explaining peri-urban squatting. But she fails to consistently link together political and economic factors. She tends to be more emphatic on the political aspect. In fact most of the literature reviewed here shares this problem. In this thesis, I try to avoid this by attempting to balance the political and economic issues related to squatting. Hence, the thesis proceeds from an analysis of wages to a critical examination of the various laws and legislations.

Lastly, Barry Kinkead-Weekes in his article<sup>14</sup> titled 'The Solution of the African Squatter Problem in the 1950s', presented at the fourth Cape Town History Workshop at UCT, in 1983, focuses largely on the relocation of Africans to the outskirts of the expanding city. But in his preamble, he indicates how the problem of squatting grew in Cape Town. He emphasises the inter-war period as the one period during which squatting became a serious problem in Cape Town. Like Budow, he mentions as the main causes of the problem, accelerating urbanisation and the extremely slow growth of public housing.<sup>(1)</sup> As a result people without accommodation

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14. Kinkead-Weekes, B.: 'The Solution of African Squatter Problem in the 1950s', (Unpublished Paper presented at the Fourth Cape Town History Workshop, UCT, 1983), p.2.

"chose to occupy land illegally and to help each other build huts for themselves and their families".<sup>(1)</sup> Besides the housing shortages, Kinkead-Weekes<sup>2</sup> also points out a number of pieces of legislation which before 1945 accelerated the growth of squatting. They were the 1934 Slums Act whose implementation in such areas as District Six and the Bo-Kaap led to the eviction of at least 10 000 people.<sup>(2)</sup> The 1937 Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act made applicable to Cape Town in terms of Proclamation 105 of June 1939, simply moved the problem of "illegal" "surplus" Africans to surrounding areas such as Windermere, and the northern suburbs of Durbanville, Parow and Goodwood, where squatter settlements soon developed.<sup>(3)</sup> This legislation denied Africans entry to the cities unless their labour was needed or they could prove that they were bona-fide visitors. Other legislations which Kinkead-Weekes refers to include the 1945 Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act which became applicable in Cape Town in 1947.<sup>(4)</sup> According to this legislation, Africans could "only travel to Cape Town if they could convince their local magistrates that their prospective employers were prepared to "repatriate" them when they were discharged from

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1. Kinkead-Weekes, B.: 'The Solution of African Squatter Problem in the 1950s', p.2.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

employment".<sup>(1)</sup>

These laws complicated the local housing problem which was steadily growing worse during the 1930s and had reached crisis proportions by the end of the Second World War. Kinkead-Weekes<sup>e</sup> argues that the problem was temporarily "solved" in the period up to 1960 by the National Party government which came to power in 1948.<sup>(2)</sup> He makes reference to the 1952 Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, which became applicable in Cape Town at the end of 1952, as having marked the time when "effective influx control became possible".<sup>(3)</sup> "Illegal" Africans during this period were not only raided by the police but were also sent back to the reserves. This occurred despite protests by local branches of the ANC.<sup>(4)</sup>

What seems to escape Kinkead-Weekes' analysis (and indeed the analysis of many local histories of squatting) is the fact that with the intensification of influx control legislation after 1948, many "illegal" Africans, instead of complying with the legislation, which sent them back to the reserves,

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1. Kinkead-Weekes, B.: 'The Solution of African Squatter Problem in the 1950s', p.7.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.8.

4. Ibid., p.8-9.

or to established townships and temporary squatter camps, continued squatting but in more secretive forms in the bushes and behind sand dunes where it was not easy to discover. This in itself was another form of resistance. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I have tried to elaborate on this particular form of squatting.

Kinhead-Weeks<sup>2</sup> proceeds and demonstrates that "as the influx control became increasingly effective, and more and more "illegals" were "endorsed out" of the region, local authorities in the Western Cape gradually gained control of the "squatter problem" ".<sup>(1)</sup> A number of "site and service camps" where controlled squatting was permitted were established. Alongside the controlled squatter camps were "bachelor" compounds into which African inhabitants of previously unregulated shanty towns were forcibly moved.<sup>(2)</sup> The controlled squatter camps were the core of new locations that arose in the Western Cape and throughout South Africa during the late 1950s. After 1955, especially, many African squatters were driven "by pass raids and other forms of coercion into Nyanga emergency camps".<sup>(1)</sup>

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1. Kinhead-Weekes, B.: 'The Solution of African Squatter Problem in the 1950s', p.13.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.



Like many other writers of local history of squatting, Kinkead-Weekes focuses more on legislation and political issues than the economic aspects. As a result his article lacks a balanced perspective on factors underpinning the growth of squatting in Cape Town after World War II. But, at the same time Kinkead-Weekes provides a number of important details which have helped to focus my ideas especially in the last chapter.

In addition to the literature reviewed here, there are a number of other works on peri-urban squatting produced by people like Josette Cole, Andrew Silk, etc. Although they are of some use for this study, their focus is on a much later period, ie. late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, so only occasional reference is made to them.

All in all, the local histories of squatting reviewed in this chapter show a tendency to examine organised squatter communities which, in Bonner's words, are merely "the high points, the most visible concerted expressions" of a very broad phenomenon.<sup>(2)</sup> This thesis in its analysis of peri-urban squatting also focuses on the fairly organised squatter

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1. Kinkead-Weekes, B.: 'The Solution of African Squatter Problem in the 1950s', p.13.
2. Bonner, P. : 'The politics of Black squatter movements in the Rand, 1944-1952', p.1.

communities and proceeds further than that. It argues for the existence of squatter groups who were not organised and settled communities. Their existence as squatters falls outside the 'normal' trends recorded in traditional historical works. They were a peculiar group in that they squatted in far more secretive ways since their presence in Cape Town was completely 'illegal'. These people had nothing to fall back on in the reserves, did not qualify for 'legalised' squatter camps, and locations, and therefore continued squatting the midst of thick forests and behind sand dunes. Their shacks were usually up in the evenings only to disappear before sunshine. Information on this category of squatters is hard to find except through oral interviews. More research into their life and activities still needs to be done. What is highlighted in this thesis about this form of squatting only scratches the surface.

Existing local histories of squatting, some of which have been reviewed in this chapter have shown a tendency of historians to linger in the past. None of the works reviewed above attempts to relate the problem of squatting to the present and may be propose a few approaches towards a solution. This is a problem because it makes academic research in this particularly interesting area useful only to a handful of academics. In this thesis I have made attempts to move away from this tendency. I have attempted to relate the problem of squatting in the past to the present one and

give broad indications towards the solution. This happens only in the conclusions of the thesis. Otherwise, apart from the new material incorporated, and broader issues emphasised, the thesis mainly reorganises existing information and broadens the foundations already laid by other local histories of squatting.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOME ISSUES OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOUTH AFRICA

It is the contention of the whole thesis that the two main issues which gave birth to and allowed peri-urban squatting to grow in South Africa were both economic and political. Therefore it is very important that before one examines the political economy of peri-urban squatting in Cape Town, an attempt should be made to sketch some aspects of the broad political economy of South Africa. But the question remains as to what political economy exactly means. "In Marx's view, political economy was the theoretical expression of the rising capitalist society, which found nothing contradictory in the specific class relations which made its development possible. The critique of political economy focused exactly on contradictions inherent in capital production in both theoretical and practical terms."<sup>(1)</sup> Without contradicting the stated view, this chapter simplifies political economy to describe the nature of relations and influences that political and economic aspects had on each other whilst at the same time shaping the fabric of South African urban and rural society, especially during the period 1945 to 1960. In that way the context within which the emergence and rapid

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1. Mattick, P. : Marxism, Last Refuge of the Bourgeoisie?,

(London, The Merlin Press, 1983), p.3.

growth of peri-urban squatting can be understood is framed and the challenge of deciding where capitalism stood in relation to the problem is confronted.

However, an account of the political economy of South Africa is not complete if it does not include the issue of imperialism. Imperialism is one of the important variables which cannot be left out when defining the specific character of the South African social formation. It underlies in very important ways some of the historically evolved political and economic problems facing not only South Africa but also the rest of the Third World. The problem of peri-urban squatting around most South African cities, its persistence in ever increasing volumes, is not merely an expression of a housing shortage experienced everywhere, but links very inextricably with deep seated national political and economic problems. These in their totality have their roots in the way the country was colonised and its position in the 'imperialist chain' (1). More and above that, a reference to the issue of imperialism is made necessary by the fact the South Africa is a constituent part of an international economic and political order which assumed a different shape in the post World War II period. This was another phase of imperialism

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1. Bloch, G. : 'The Development of manufacturing Industry in South Africa, 1939 to 1969', (M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1980), pp.106-135.

characterised by more rapid consolidation of monopoly capitalist relations in the metropolises and the internationalisation of productive capital.<sup>(1)</sup> This post-World War II phase of imperialism was "marked by the United States' hegemony in the effort to deal with worsening of capitalist contradictions after World War II".<sup>(2)</sup> What was at stake as Mandel argues, were new ways of counter-acting the tendency for falling rates of profit under changing conditions of the post-war era.<sup>(3)</sup> This encouraged "the concentration and centralisation of capital into big conglomerates that struggled with each other turning to profit every opportunity available in the production of surplus value".<sup>(4)</sup> Giant multinational corporations emerged during this period "as net importers of capital from their exploited overseas empires through surplus appropriation".<sup>(5)</sup>

These developments had several important implications for the Third World political economies. In South Africa, for example, a number of conflicts or contradictions surfaced and

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1. Bloch, G. : 'The Development of Manufacturing Industry', p.105.
  2. Onimode, B. : Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria; the dialectic of mass poverty, (London, Zed Press, 1982), pp.5-6.
  3. Mandel, E. : Late Capitalism, (London, NLB, 1975). (Also cited in Bloch, G., pp.142-230).
  4. Bloch, G. : 'The Development of Manufacturing Industry', pp.106-135.
  5. Onimode, B. : Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria; p.6.

crystalized into structural features of the development of capitalism inside the country. These were between foreign capital represented by giant multinational corporations (eg. Anglo-American) and more local and small capital. The direct presence of giant conglomerates inside the country 'steeped the terrain of competitive survival' <sup>(1)</sup> against the small scale and local forms of capital. There was competition not only for labour but also over quantity and quality of production in order to maximise profit. Multinational corporations occupied a position of advantage as a small percentage of their establishments could produce the largest percentage of output. See, as an example, the table below <sup>(2)</sup>

PERCENTAGE ESTABLISHMENTS PRODUCING 50% OF OUTPUT IN  
RESPECTIVE INDUSTRIES, 1953/4

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Percentage of establishments</u>
Food and Drink	7,6
Vehicles	3,6
Metal and Engineering	4,8
Clothing and Textile	11,7
Leather	14,3

Thus for instance, in Canning where 12 establishments put out 50% of output, only 5% of firms were responsible for 80-85% of gross output. <sup>(3)</sup>

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1. Bloch, G. : 'The Development of Manufacturing Industry', p.217.

2. The table is taken from U.G.36/1958, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into (S.P. du Toit, Viljoen), Policy Relating to the Protection of Industries, para. 237. (Also cited in Bloch, G., p.114).

3. Ibid.

Whereas in the mid-1950s, smaller firms were slowly being taken over by large firms and a swelling assemblage of workers was on a single factory floor. The table below gives a clear indication of the extent to which an increasing proportion of employees were found in large scale establishments.<sup>(1)</sup>

SIZE (IN TERMS OF EMPLOYEES) OF MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENTS  
(South Africa)

No of employees	A:No of establishments, as % of total	B:No of employees, as % of total	1953-4	
			A	B
9 and less	65	14	45,8	4,8
10-49	27	25	35,6	16,6
50-99	4	12	8,8	12,5
100-199	4 (a)	49 (b)	4,7	13,1
200-299			2,0	9,4
300-399			1,0	6,9
400-499			0,6	4,6
500-999			1,0	13,5
1000 plus			0,5	18,6

NB: (a) for 100 or more employees  
(b) for the years 1916-17

Even though, as indicated above the trend was clearly towards the establishment of monopoly capitalist relations in South African industry, technologically the country depended on the metropolises in a way which upset the balance of payments. The country lacked requisite factors of production eg. labour with necessary skills, technological sophistication, etc.<sup>(2)</sup>

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1. Bloch, G.: 'The Development of Manufacturing Industry',  
p.115.
  2. Ibid.



The cost of importing these, further contributed towards entrenching the subordinate position of South Africa.

The important implications of these developments were the following; for small scale capital, operating at the margins of profitability, the only alternative was to "force down the value of necessary labour-time so as to increase the share of value going to the capitalist; in other words, extract absolute surplus value and raise the rate of exploitation through reducing the variable component of capital".<sup>(1)</sup>

Direct coercion of the Black proletariat and pressure on their wages became one of the forms taken in the extraction of absolute surplus value, particularly to the benefit of smaller capital.<sup>(2)</sup> It was at that point that the coercive role of the white state assumed more importance in securing, all forms of capital, especially local capital, possibilities

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1. Bloch, G. : 'The development of manufacturing industry',  
p.216.

2. NB. The extraction of absolute surplus value was not only a necessity for smaller capital. Larger capital as well, partially limited in their capacity to take advantage of production line processes and mechanisation by resistance of white workers on the factory floor, welcomed the benefits accruing from the pressure on Black wages even though this was not a precondition of profitability.

of profit. Hence every living wage struggle especially after 1948 was regarded as a political struggle with every likelihood of state interference. The implications of some of these points are revealed when one periodises and examines in a fairly detailed fashion the post-war economy of South Africa.

Periodising the post-war economy of South Africa entails a division of the period of research into years which were on the same point of the growth cycle. In that case one can periodise a post-war economy of South Africa according to the following peak to peak cycles; 1948 to 1955, 1955 to 1960.<sup>(1)</sup> The years 1945 to 1946 are the immediate post-war period. Developments before and during these years laid the basis for the peak to peak cycles of 1948 to 1955, 1955 to 1960.

Focussing on the immediate post-war period itself one notices that it began highly favourable especially for manufacturing industry hence the growth of small scale commodity production in most South African cities (eg. Cape Town). This <sup>N<sup>13</sup></sup> attracted a number of people to the cities. According to Palmer, between 1945 and 1946, 1949 and 1950 the number of small scale establishments grew by 79% and output at constant

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1. Nattras, Nicoli: "Economic Power and Profits in Post-war Manufacturing", in Nattras, N. and Ardington, E. (eds.), The Political Economy of South Africa, (Oxford, O.U.P., 1990).

prices by 50%.<sup>(1)</sup> Concurrently with this, was a consolidation of larger and more mechanised plants (which after 1950 were beginning to absorb small scale establishments). Hence between 1945 and 1949, the average value of plant, machinery and tools per establishment grew by some 40% and average value of mechanical power per worker by 33%, suggesting a remarkable increase in the organic composition of capital and increasing mechanisation.<sup>(2)</sup> Besides that, the immediate post-war period also witnessed a significant inflow of foreign finance both through the granting of licences to local firms and the establishment of local subsidiaries or branches under the direct control of parent companies.<sup>(3)</sup> But after this period, and especially in the 1950s, the trend was undoubtedly towards the establishment of larger industrial units and it increasingly became the "strong industrial or financial organisations" which played a central role in the development of secondary industry.<sup>(4)</sup> It may be interesting,

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1. Palmer, G.F.D.: "Some Aspects of the Development of Secondary Industry in South Africa Since the Depression 1929 to 1932", in South African Journal of Economics, No. 22(1), 1954. (Cited in Bloch, G.), p.132.
2. Bloch, G. : 'The development of manufacturing industry', p.132
3. Ibid.
4. UG36/1958, Policy Relating to the Protection of Industries, Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into. (S.P. du Toit, Viljoen), (Also cited in Bloch, G.), p.254.

perhaps to illustrate first South Africa's economic growth performance before the two periods (ie. 1948-1955, 1955-1960) in order to draw certain comparisons.

SOUTH AFRICA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH PERFORMANCE, 1911 TO 1948<sup>(1)</sup>

Period	Gross domestic product per capita	Gross domestic surplus (profits)	Average wage per man	White wage per man	Black wage per man
1911-28	2,1	0,0			
1928-40	4,2	2,0	1,2	1,2	2,1
1940-48	4,6	2,4			

On the whole the performance of the economy during this pre-1948 period was characterised by steady growth as is shown in the table above. But after 1948, the era of implementation of apartheid laws nationally, but internationally still part of imperialism "the rate of growth of South African

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1. The figures are estimated from : South African Statistics 1974, 1976, 1978 and are outlined in Mike McGrath's article "Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Social Change". The figures also appear in W.F.J. Steenkamp's article, "Bantu Wages in South Africa", in South African Journal of Economics, Vol. 30, June 1962. Of course the figures arouse a degree of skepticism as it is difficult to imagine that there was any period in the history of South African economy when Black wages could double those of whites. Besides that the figures are not detailed enough to show wage differences according to 'racial' grouping eg. Coloured, African, Asiatic and also the level of skill. But the figures do indicate clearly that between 1928 to 1940, the wages of Black people were far better off than in the post 1948 period.

output, of total profits and of white real wage rates, were all high compared to the growth rates experienced over the period 1911 to 1940, whilst the rate of growth of real Black wages was significantly lower than it had been in the earlier period".<sup>(1)</sup> The following table clearly illustrates this point:<sup>(2)</sup>

SOUTH AFRICA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH PERFORMANCE, 1948 TO 1973

Period	Gross domestic product per capita	Gross domestic surplus (profits)	Average wage per man	White wage per man	Black wage per man
1948-73	5,3	2,7	1,2	3,0	1,3

The growth rate of white wages more than doubled in the mining industry and rose almost three times as fast in manufacturing and construction especially in the first twelve

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1. McGrath, M. : "Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Social Change" in Nattras, N. and Ardington, E. (eds.), The Political Economy of South Africa, p.92.
2. The figures are estimated from : South African Statistics, 1974, 1976, 1978 cited in Mike McGrath's article "Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Social Change". The figures also appear in W.F.J. Steenkamp's article, "Bantu Wages in South Africa", in South African Journal of Economics, Vol. 30, June 1962.

years of the Nationalist regime. See table below: (1)

EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN MANUFACTURING :1948-55

Average annual compound growth rates : 1948 to 1955				
	White	Coloured & Indian	Black	Total
Employment	3,2	4,7	6,5	5,2
Real wages	3,4	0,3	-0,6	1,0
Product wages	1,9	-1,3	-2,1	-0,4
Surplus				0,1

What the above trend suggests is that, <sup>From</sup> between 1948 to 1955, labour was relatively weakened and therefore not in a position to protect its share of output from falling down whereas between 1955 and 1960, labour secured several gains at the expense of profits. (2) "However little this was true in aggregate, the relative strength of workers differed remarkably between races". (3) As can be seen in the table above, whilst the white wages rose remarkably faster than those of Blacks, Black employment growth outstripped that of whites especially in the late 1950s. Because of the level and rate of growth white wages in the years 1948-1955, 1955-1960, as compared to other groups, their share of the wage bill increased from 61,7% to 63,4%, despite a slight decline

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1. Nattras, Nicoli: "Economic Power and Profits in Post-war Manufacturing", p.113.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.112.

in the white share of employment from 32,3% to 27%.<sup>(1)</sup> In real terms average white wages grew at 3,9% per annum between 1948-55 whereas the real wages of Black workers fell by 0,6% per annum.<sup>(2)</sup> It is therefore small wonder that one may be interested to know reasons for this wide gap.

An understanding of what the period 1948-55 actually implied in broad terms may help to throw some light on this. The period implied the unification of disparate forces of Afrikaner Nationalist movement under the banner of apartheid. "The vaguely formulated apartheid concept crystallised and condensed the responses of various class forces to the differential impact of the proletarianisation and increasing urbanisation, of the African population, the rising value of labour power and the changing division of labour within industry which brought ever large numbers of African workers into semi-skilled operating positions. It reflected the farmers' concern over their declining labour supply and inability to compete for labour against the higher wages paid in industry and commerce. It encompasses the concern of emerging Afrikaner business for a cheap labour policy to ensure their own accumulation. And it pandered to the fears of <sup>a</sup> specific strata of white workers at being displaced in the

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1. Nattras, Nicoli: "Economic Power and Profits in Post-war Manufacturing", p.112.

2. Ibid.

new industrial division of labour by cheaper African labour".<sup>(1)</sup> Interesting enough to notice is that basic relations of capitalism were not in any way challenged but instead through the state, Afrikaner agents who in the past were marginalised or denied favourable conditions for accumulation were secured favourable positions in the social formation. In other words all this shows why the period 1948 to 1955, the immediate period of Nationalist Party victory, became the only period in the post-war period during which Black wages, indeed, showed a sharp relative and absolute decline, especially in the manufacturing industry.<sup>(2)</sup> The diagram in the following page captures well the general picture.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. O'Meara, D. : 'Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-48', (Phd. Thesis, University of Sussex, 1979), p.206.
  2. Hindson, D.C. : 'Economic Dualism and Labour Reallocation in South Africa, 1917-70', (MA. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1974).
  3. The diagram is taken from Hindson, D.C. : 'Economic Dualism and Labour Reallocation in South Africa, 1917-70', (Diagram 4.3).



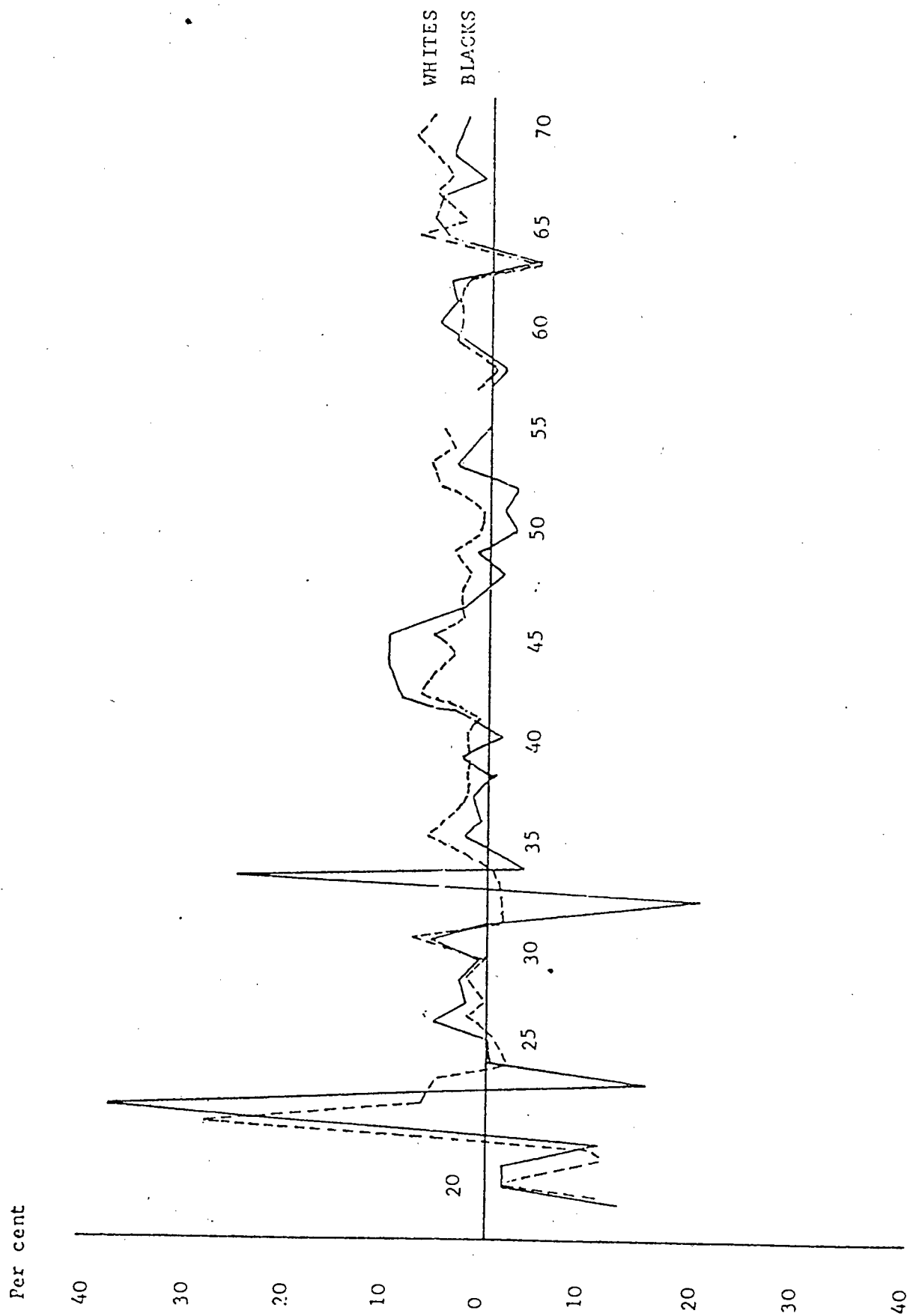


FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN REAL AVERAGE ANNUAL EARNINGS OF WHITES AND BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICAN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES 1916-1970 (1938 PRICES)

(Source: Hindson, thesis: Diagram 4.3).

The period 1955-60, itself, also witnessed a rise in white wages relatively higher than Black wages. This time some real wage gains were secured by Black workers, probably as a result of both a tightening up of the labour market and labour industrial militancy. See table below: <sup>(1)</sup>

EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN MANUFACTURING :1948-55

Average annual compound growth rates : 1955 to 1960				
	White	Coloured & Indian	Black	Total
Employment	-0,7	1,0	0,6	0,3
Real wages	4,5	2,6	2,8	3,4
Product wages	5,3	3,5	3,9	4,2
Surplus				3,8

Another interesting trend is displayed in product wages. <sup>(2)</sup>  
During the period 1948 to 1955, the product wages for Black workers fell sharply by 2,1% per annum whereas the white product wages rose by 1,9% per annum. "In each case the trend in product wages was far more favourable to capitalists than would be suggested by trends in real wages". <sup>(3)</sup> Between 1955 and 1960 product wages for Black workers rose faster, albeit by only 0,1%. White workers on the other hand, in spite of

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1. Nattras, Nicoli: "Economic Power and Profits in Post-war Manufacturing", p.113.

2. As Nicoli Nattras explains, product wages reflect the real cost to the capitalists of employing labour.

3. Ibid., p.114.

the small drop in employment, maintained their strong bargaining position and their product wages remained well above the growth in the surplus available.<sup>(1)</sup> All in all the South African economy in both periods ie. 1948-55 and 1955-60, grew at an annual average rate of 4,4% per annum and this compared favourably with the population growth of 2,4% per annum over this period.<sup>(2)</sup> But the essence of the matter is that the economic growth was always more in the interests of whites than the Black majority of South Africa. Remarkable economic imbalances between races and classes remained a constant variable throughout. Further than that the position of multinational corporations as net importers of capital from South Africa through surplus appropriation prevented the country from realising to the fullest its economic development potential. Wealth was locked in the hands of the few who represented the interests of imperialism as well as those of domestic capitalists. This has been clearly indicated by the detailed outline of differences in wage levels which prevailed over the period.

The problem in the studies of political economy of in South

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1. Nattras, Nicoli: "Economic Power and Profits in Post-war Manufacturing".
2. Hofmeyer, J. : "Black Wages: the Post-war Experience" in Nattras, N. and Ardington, E., (eds.) The Political Economy of South Africa.

Africa is that sometimes the actual conditions in rural South Africa are not considered adequately as part of an account of political economy. That is why at this point I want to incorporate some of the material about conditions in the reserves during this period. Hopefully this together with already elaborated issues will lay the basis for an understanding of the problem of peri-urban squatting which in essence is an issue of political economy.

According to Bundy, a vast and depressing body of evidence exists as to the nature and extent of underdevelopment in rural South Africa (and particularly in Transkei and Ciskei) in the forty years that followed the 1913 Act.<sup>(1)</sup> "The details abound of infant mortality, malnutrition, disease and debility".<sup>(2)</sup> See table in the next page.

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1. Bundy, C. : The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, (Cape Town, David Philip, Second Edition, 1988), p.221.

2. Ibid.

SAMPLE DATA REGARDING CHILD MORTALITY (NATIVE AREAS), 1937<sup>(1)</sup>

District	No of mothers questioned	Child mortality per 1,000 live births		
		1 yr or under	2 yrs or under	18 yrs or under
Ciskei	295	164	244	374
Transkei	1,432	284	379	557
Basutholand	153	140	189	290
Mean	-	242	327	508

Of course this is insufficient to enable one to state what the infantile mortality rate actually was. These figures are only useful as estimates, "for they are based on a questioning of individual women regarding their maternal reproductive history, and not on a system of birth and death registration. The information is, however, sufficient to show that the rate is extremely high compared with recent rates recorded in other countries, and considerably higher than that for Europeans in South Africa, which for the three yearly period 1935-1938 averaged 59 per 1000 live births".<sup>(1)</sup>

Social dislocation expressed in divorce, illegitimacy, prostitution and crime; the erosion, dessication and falling fertility of the soil; ubiquity of indebtedness and material

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1. U.G. No.32 - 1946: Report of Social and Economic Planning Council, (Pretoria, Government Publishers), p.11.

2. Ibid.

insufficiency of the meanest kind, were all the evils endemic in the nature of life in rural South Africa.<sup>(1)</sup> "The cumulative effects of these features is not easily described; life moulded by them was not lightly endured".<sup>(2)</sup> Data collected from the Transkei for instance, during the 1930s, clearly suggests that agricultural production there was on the decline, peasant families spent an average of a fifth to a quarter of their income on food.<sup>(3)</sup> "Debt was endemic" and migrant labour persisted at a high, steady level.<sup>(4)</sup> In the Ciskei, "falling yields, an increasing scarcity of resources and heightened competition for them, and a migrant labour level so high as to seriously deplete the agricultural workforce",<sup>(5)</sup> were pervasive features of the economy. There was also a sharp rise in the migration of adult women workers between 1936 and 1946 which meant that the 'home' population

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1. Bundy, C. : The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry.
2. Ibid., p.221.
3. Haines, E.S.: 'The Transkei Trader', in South African Journal of Economics, Vol. 1, (1933). (Information supplied by Bundy, C.), p.224.
4. Pim, H.: A Transkei Enquiry, (Lovedale, 1934). (Information supplied by Bundy, C.), p.224.
5. Bundy, C. : The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.224.

became even more skewed: over half of the 'permanent' Keiskammahoek population consisted of those too old, too young or ill to earn wages.<sup>(1)</sup> The situation in Transkei was almost similar with that in Ciskei. "Every available fit labourer in the Transkei, entered upon a term of employment within a period of two years".<sup>(2)</sup> As a result, as is stated in the 1936 Census Report, about 54% of the reserves' adult male population was in employment in the cities.<sup>(3)</sup> In all the reserves, especially in areas where the masculinity ratio was abnormally low, agricultural output performed feebly. "A 1944 Union Government report showed that in African reserves in all four provinces production of both the staple grains, maize and sorghum, declined in the period between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Second World War. In the Transkei alone, the production of grain was estimated to have declined<sup>by</sup> about 25% during the 1930s".<sup>(4)</sup> Transkei had to import an average of 187,000 bags of grain (about 13% of its total requirements) per year, between 1939

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1. Bundy, C. : The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.225.

2. Ibid.

3. U.G. No.32-1946 'The Native Reserves ... of South Africa'.

4. Bundy, C. : The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.224.

and 1942.<sup>(1)</sup> But most of all, land hunger was the basis of all evils obtaining in the reserves. "The rate of increase in population far outstripped the rate at which land was added to the existing native areas, with the result that average density of population per square mile increased from 50.3 in 1916 to 57.2 in 1936. In addition to that, thousands of families in the reserves, not only owned no land, but also possessed no stock".<sup>(2)</sup> In seven Transkei districts, all of which had been surveyed under the provision of the Glen Grey Act, over 11,000 married hut owners payed tax and owned no land.<sup>(3)</sup> Whereas the Social and Economic Planning Council states that in June 1943 the number was 60,100 in surveyed districts and in unsurveyed districts it was 3,590.<sup>(4)</sup> R.W. Norton who was the Assistant Director of Native Agriculture for the Ciskei once noted that "nearly one third of all families have no arable land. The average land holder works what is, under the climatic conditions obtaining in the Ciskei, a sub-economic unit of land. He owns sub-

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1. U.G. No.21 - 1944, Mine Native Wages Commission.  
(Information supplied by Bundy, C., p.224).
2. U.U. No.32 - 1946, Report of Social and Economic Planning Council, (Pretoria, Government Publishers).
3. Makiwane, T.M. : " Agricultural and Pastoral Conditions",  
in Christian Students and Modern South Africa (Lovedale,  
n.d.) (Information supplied by Bundy, C., p.225).
4. U.G. No.32 - 1946, Report of Social and Economic Planning Council.



economic numbers of stock".<sup>(1)</sup> Even though there existed a small favoured class of men who owned tracks of land, and a number of cattle and sheep, dispossession and poverty still remained a dominant feature.

During the period 1945 to 1960, the conditions in the reserves had gone from bad to worse. "Natives were unable to acquire land" as the reserves were increasingly overcrowded and increasingly poverty stricken.<sup>(2)</sup> The drought which hit the Southern Free State and Eastern Cape during these years added misery, in these two regions of the country. Maize production, in all regions was reported to have been heavily affected by the drought.<sup>(3)</sup> Therefore, trapped in a process of relentless economic regression, it is understandable why the mass of the population in the reserves flooded the cities in search of jobs, despite the government's many restricting laws. This happened initially at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century and again in the 1930s and 1940s. As a result the total urban African population increased during these years from 1,1 million in 1936 to 1,7 million in 1946 and to 2,3 million in 1951. The average annual rates of

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1. U.G. No. 28-1948, The Fagan Report, p.15.
  2. Cape Times, 07/03/1945.
  3. Cape Times, 06/01/1945.

increase were 3,4% and 6,6% respectively.<sup>(1)</sup> Massive immigration from rural areas, especially during the Second World War, depressed Black wages in industry in order to sustain required profit levels, the costs of family subsistence in an urban environment, coincided with serious housing shortages for Blacks. All these factors in their combination give a solid explanation for the origin and growth of peri-urban squatting around South Africa's major cities. But it will be a great mistake to ignore the role of racial legislation~~s~~ in widening chances for the development of this peri-urban phenomenon.

After the Second World War, South Africa's fragile white national unity collapsed and the Nationalist Party which broke away and took over power in 1948 altered in fundamental ways the path of development. So a fairly liberal era of the 1940s was followed by the dictatorship of the Afrikaner state from the late 1940s. Legislation~~s~~ of the latter conflicted in many ways with the varying interests of manufacturing industry and commerce. The substance of the state's policy during this period was to rationalise African labour supply to the cities so that only what was considered

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1. Hindson, D.: 'The Pass System and Differentiated Labour Power', (Paper presented to the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, 16th Annual Conference, Cape Town, July 1985).

by the state to be 'legitimate' demands of industry were met.<sup>(1)</sup> The state was able to meet these objectives through its influx control policy. The central aspect of this policy was the Urban Labour Preference Policy. The major objective of the latter was to curb the existence of large surpluses of African labour in the cities in order to avert agricultural labour shortages on white farms. That is why the state declared the need "to employ every possible Bantu legally domiciled in a town" and their placement in jobs which were in practice reserved for migrant labourers.<sup>(2)</sup> The conflict started when the government made it an obligation that employers should use available labour supplies exhaustively before importing migrants from areas outside the city. The Native Laws Amendment Act (which ammended, inter alia, the 1945 Urban Areas Act and 1911 Labour Regulations Act) was used by the state as a means of giving legal substance to the

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1. Posel, D.: "Doing Business with the Pass Laws: Influx Control and the Interests of Manufacturing and Commerce in South Africa in the 1950s", (Paper presented to the Conference on South Africa in the 1950s, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of Oxford, 1987).
2. Eiselen, W.: 'The Demand for and the Supply of Bantu Labour in Johannesburg', Bantu, No.5, (1958), p.9.  
(Also cited in Posel D.: 'Doing Business with the Pass Laws', p.8)

matter. The policy inevitably contrasted in many ways with the interests of manufacturing and commerce because it never took into cognizance the two major variables around which the employer's demands for African labour were structured. These variables were the level of skill required for a job and secondly the perceived differences between urban and migrant workers. The state's policy on the other hand, whilst it facilitated the matching of labour supply and demand, was crudely conceived in quantitative terms.<sup>(1)</sup> The state also instituted the Labour Bureaux system, as the only correct channel through which employers could have access to urban labour. "But industrialists in search of urbanised labour had nothing to gain by using the Labour Bureaux system, since they experienced no difficulty in meeting their labour needs on their own".<sup>(2)</sup> So the employers, in defiance, ignored the Labour Bureaux or when the assistance of the Labour Bureaux was needed, migrant labour preference was made a leading priority.<sup>(3)</sup> Whilst freeing themselves from the constraints of state policy, employers also contributed <sup>towards increasing</sup> the size of the African population in the cities. They employed the <sup>the latter</sup> 'illegally' domiciled because ~~they~~ were the only ones who

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1. Posel, D.: "Doing Business with the Pass Laws: Influx Control and the Interests of Manufacturing and Commerce in South Africa in the 1950s", pp.19-20.
2. Ibid., p.20.
3. Ibid.

could tolerate bad working conditions and accept extremely poor wages. This helped the employer to maximise his profits.

In summary the key argument contained in this chapter is that the political-economy of South Africa, especially during the period 1945 to 1960 can be understood by examining a number of variables some of which are very difficult to harmonise together in a single account. One of these variables involves the issue of imperialism which is often ignored or not emphasised in the studies of South Africa's political economy. During the period 1945 to 1960 imperialism manifested itself in South Africa through increasing concentration in industry and greater competition with more local and small scale capital. The competition was not only for labour but also for quantity and quality of production in order to maximise profit. Small scale capital, operating on the margins of profitability due to increasing competition, had to force down the level of wages paid to the labour force in order to maximise profits. This coupled with direct coercion affected the Black working-class most. The role of the state in securing various forms of capital especially the smaller and more local forms of capital became very important during this period. So the Nationalist Party government after 1948 protected the concerns of various forms of local capital and negotiated them with those of foreign and large scale capital. As a result during the immediate period of

Nationalist Party victory, Black wages showed a sharp relative and absolute decline, especially in manufacturing industry. This becomes more clear if one periodises the South African post-World War II economy. Despite the depressed wages in the cities, deteriorating conditions in the reserves resulted in increasing migration of Black people to the cities in search of work. The various legislative measures were promulgated by the government to prevent this process. Their combination with all the other factors mentioned in this chapter put Black people on a position of structural disadvantage during this era of consolidation of industrial capitalism in South Africa.

Quite clearly this chapter does not touch every constituent element of the political economy of South Africa during this period. It only highlights those issues considered crucial and more salient. In the following chapter an attempt is made to particularise some of the issues mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

SOME ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CAPE TOWN, 1945-60

Historiographically, the entire Western Cape region is a relatively neglected area of inquiry.<sup>(1)</sup> Most scholarly works have not been particularly concerned with the region because it does not occupy a central position in the national political economy. Instead the tendency in recent social and historical work has been too much focused on the Witwatersrand and the Transvaal.<sup>(2)</sup> Yet more about South Africa, particularly the political and economic issues affecting it, can be learned if more attention in terms of historical work is focussed on the Western Cape. Wilmo t James also concurs when he argues that "in contrast with the rest of South Africa, and predating mineral and industrial revolutions of late nineteenth century Transvaal, a proletariat emerged in the Western Cape very early on in its history".<sup>(3)</sup> Moreover, the close correlation between race and class which features very prominently in the present day South Africa has its roots historically in the Western Cape. This chapter, besides adopting a program of conceptual

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1. James, W. G. and Simons, M. : The Angry Divide, (Cape Town, Dave Phillip, 1989), p.1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

mapping in order to clear the way for concrete analysis, suggests the significance of the chosen period of research. Furthermore, it adopts a definition of Cape Town, however loosely formulated, in order to identify the components of the urban economic unit. Whilst recognising that the trajectory of economic and social change in Cape Town has always been intertwined with broader economic transformations, firstly in the Western Cape region and in South Africa as a whole, <sup>(1)</sup> the chapter tries to particularise some of these broad formulations, especially those highlighted in the previous chapter. This it does by examining wage levels between racial groups, state policies, as well as the interests of the manufacturing sector. What the chapter does not do is to continue with the issue of imperialism mentioned in chapter two. This is because of the fact that research or hard statistical information on local monopolistic tendencies is very scanty. In other words the impact of the imperialism on the political economy of Cape Town is inadequately examined in this chapter. But the chapter succeeds in its attempt to clarify the fact that, to a certain extent, broad formulations taken from the studies of political economy at a macro-national level may gloss over perculiar contradictions which define each region's specific conditions. In other words this chapter demonstrates that the

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1. Jeppie, S. : 'Aspects of Popular Culture and Class Expression in Inner Cape Town', p.22.



Western Cape region, particularly Cape Town, had its own inflections which added an important dimension to the whole plethora of factors shaping the national political economy.<sup>(1)</sup> One can mention as an example the Coloured Labour Preference Policy, predominance of small industrial establishments, etc. to demonstrate the peculiarity of Cape Town. These factors also added an important dimension to the explanations given about the origins and growth of peri-urban squatting in South Africa. Of course the thesis as a whole, hopefully, will demonstrate this.

Examining aspects of the political economy of Cape Town means examining the entire Western Cape region's political economy. This is because of the central role Cape Town plays in the politics and economy of the region. The definition of Cape Town employed here, covers Wynberg, Woodstock, Simonstown, Bellville, and Cape Town magisterial districts as defined in the industrial censuses.<sup>(2)</sup> These were all but an integral and organic part of the urban economic unit. The lacunae which exists in our knowledge of twentieth century Cape Town suggests the significance and value of this attempt to

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1. Of course, these 'own inflections', were in very important ways dialectically related to broader structural contradictions characterising the social formation
  2. U.G. No. 50/1949. 'Census of Industrial Establishments, 1945-1946', (Pretoria, Government Publishers).

outline aspects of its political economy especially during the period 1945 to 1960.

Indeed the regional variation of political economy in the country has only very recently become a focus of analytical attention.<sup>(1)</sup> With the exception of Alan Mabin's work on the 'Underdevelopment of the Western Cape' at the end of the last century and Dave Kaplan's paper on 'Industrial Development in the Western Cape', very little has been written on the urban political economy of the city and its environs. Even though the analytical focus of their works predates 1945, to review them will help create an invaluable basis for understanding political economy and wider issues flowing from it during the period 1945 to 1960.

Alan Mabin in his paper first outlines how the centrality of Cape Town in economic and political affairs of South Africa in the 19th century gradually faded away in the 20th century only to be replaced by the dominance of Johannesburg, Pretoria and Southern Transvaal.<sup>(2)</sup> "Population investment and decision-making all came to be evenly concentrated in the latter region".<sup>(3)</sup> Even though Mabin does not focus

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1. Mabin, A. : "The Underdevelopment of the Western Cape, 1850-1900", in M. Simons and W.G. James (eds.), The Angry Divide, (Cape Town, Dave Phillip, 1989), p.82.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., pp.84-85.

exclusively on Cape Town, he examines regional and provincial issues subjecting to scrutiny every political and economic change which occurred. Thus he examines these events in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Transvaal from the 1840s to 1904. He argues that in the 1840s, the importance of the Eastern Cape, especially Port Elizabeth in the colonial economy surpassed the Western Cape.<sup>(1)</sup> 'The economic weight of production'<sup>(2)</sup> of the former was more important to colonial economy than the latter. He points out, as evidence, the fact that some business operations like Mosenthals decided to move their centres to Port Elizabeth. So the Eastern Cape was the main area of "pastoral expansion and inflow of foreign capital".<sup>(3)</sup> What added to the Western Cape's position of disadvantage were severe droughts of the 1860s, high population density and the search for minerals which resulted in the outflow of capital (the Eastern Cape was also affected, however, less severely by these). Mabin argues that the state of affairs led to "a relative neglect of productive activities"<sup>(4)</sup> in the Cape at large and particularly in the Western Cape. "A commitment on the part of private investors and colonial government to northward

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1. Mabin, A. : "The Underdevelopment of the Western Cape",  
p.82.

2. Ibid., pp.82-93.

3. Ibid., p.(ii).

4. Ibid., p.93.

expansion of commercial economy"<sup>(1)</sup> must have further weakened the Eastern and particularly the Western Cape regions.

So the most important point to emphasise in Mabin's work is that the economy of Cape Town (which is viewed in the context of the Western Cape region) was weakened in fundamental ways by all "the shifts in the economic geography of South Africa"<sup>(2)</sup>. It is this point which Dave Kaplan further elaborates in his article entitled 'Industrial Development in the Western Cape, 1910 -1940'. But he examines to a far greater extent internal factors underlying the lack of development of the region. He posits as the major factor, failure to develop a significant metal and engineering sector, rather than failure at industrial development as a whole. He examines three significant industrial categories as a way of assessing the industrial development of the Western Cape. As he puts it "the three most significant in the Western Cape were Categories (iv) -metal, engineering, machinery and cutlery works, Category (v) - preparation, treatment and preserving of food, drinks, condiments and tobacco, and Category (vi) -production of clothing (excluding

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1. Mabin, A. : "The Underdevelopment of the Western Cape",  
p.93.

2. Ibid.

boots and shoes), textile fabrics and similar articles".<sup>(1)</sup>  
Kaplan puts considerable emphasis on Category (iv) and the very limited development of engineering and steel works in particular because it underpinned, as he says, a pronounced weakness in capital good production which featured most in the economy of the region.<sup>(2)</sup> "As with Category (iv), industrial development is assessed with reference to measures of output, employment, capital and number of factories".<sup>(3)</sup>  
Until about 1930 the Western Cape had trends similar to other regions eg. Transvaal, in terms of articles produced and work done. The situation changed after 1930; production in the Western Cape was on the relative decline when put on a comparative scale. Even the number of workers employed was on the decline until after 1933.

What predominated in the Western Cape region were industries which were engaged in repair or maintenance rather than production. These were generally smaller, using a high proportion of artisanal labour and less rapidly growing.<sup>(4)</sup>

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1. Kaplan, D.: "Industrial Development in the Western Cape, 1910 - 1940: composition, causes and consequences", (Unpublished Paper presented at the Western Cape Roots and Realities Conference, 1986), p.3.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ibid.

In the period 1928/9 - 1932/3, according to Kaplan the Western Cape registered a relative decline in the number of these factories. This is because the Western Cape during these years was "essentially stagnant" at the level of industrial development.<sup>(1)</sup> As industry in South Africa began to rely more on local inputs, the Western Cape was thrown into serious problems. As the markets and sources of raw material were in the interior, the disadvantages of coastal location became clearly pronounced. "Moreover, with productive capacity initially limited, local producers often supplied primarily the interior markets while the coastal producers were forced to rely on higher priced inputs from overseas".<sup>(2)</sup> Kaplan argues that in addition, transport costs on locally produced inputs were higher in the Western Cape than in any of the other ports.<sup>(3)</sup> He also mentions that over the period, 1916/7 -1941/2, the metal and engineering industry in the Western Cape utilised a considerably higher percentage of white labour.<sup>(4)</sup> The number of black workers in the Western Cape metal and engineering industry remained far smaller compared to other racial groups especially before World War II.<sup>(5)</sup> What this meant was that labour costs were

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1. Kaplan, D.: "Industrial Development in the Western Cape", p.5.
  2. Board of Trade and Industries, Report No. 286, 1946, p.120
  3. Kaplan, D.: "Industrial Development in the Western Cape", p.5.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Ibid.

higher in the Western Cape. With a relatively weak mass capital good producing sector, high transport costs and labour costs, the economy of the Western Cape was fundamentally weakened especially when put on a comparative scale with regions like the Transvaal.

It is clear at this point that the basic formulations of the works by Mabin and Kaplan are to a large extent very similar. They both emphasize 'the relative neglect of local productive activities' (1) as one of the central issues which weakened the economy not only of the Western Cape region but of Cape Town, in particular. This offers us one way of explaining the emergence and growth of peri-urban squatting or the entire housing problem in Cape Town. With the economy fundamentally weakened, it was difficult to extend structures of urban society to accommodate the ever increasing incoming population. But interestingly enough, this affected mostly Black people, not whites during the period 1945 to 1960. PS

In the light of what Alan Mabin and Dave Kaplan have written the period 1945 to 1960 is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the period is obviously recent enough to gain oral information. But above and beyond that, a series of

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1. See Mabin, A. : "The Underdevelopment of the Western Cape", pp.89-93, and Kaplan, D., "Industrial Development in the Western Cape", pp.13-17.

significant shifts in the nature and forms of capital accumulation and class struggle<sup>(1)</sup> occurred during this period. Rapid industrialization and consolidation of industrial capitalism were a dominant trend. The rift between the interests of industrial capital and the state emerged and was ever widening especially after 1948. The growth of manufacturing industry in Cape Town was accompanied by greater demands for labour hence the influx of Africans into the city and a rapid growth of a settled urban Black working-class. This had been remarkable during the First and the Second World Wars and had continued until the beginning of the 1960s. The Secretary of Native Affairs, Mr W.W.M. Eiselen, in his paper read at the Sixth Congress of South African Bureau of Racial Affairs in January 1955, provides figures for increases in the number of workers in private industry.

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF WORKERS: PRIVATE INDUSTRY<sup>(2)</sup>

	1938/39	1945/46	1951/52
Western Cape	7,915	16,177	28,534

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PRIVATE INDUSTRIES:

	1938/39	1945/46	1951/52
Western Cape	1,555	1,470	1,899

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1. Jeppie, S. : 'Aspects of Popular Culture and Class

Expression'.p.4

2. Eiselen, W.W.M.: 'Natives in the Western Cape', pp.8-9.



It was the bulk of the ever increasing working population indicated in the first figure above, which constituted the squatter community around the city of Cape Town. This is indicated by the fact that most squatter settlements were situated closer to industrial works. (This is clearly elaborated in chapter four.) Despite the tightening up of the influx control in the 1940s and 1950s, the urban African population of the Cape Peninsula grew rapidly. When calculated as a whole, the increase was from 14,868 in 1936 to 37,005 in 1946 (ave. 9.6% p.a.).<sup>(1)</sup> During the years 1946 to 1951, the annual average increase was 10% but during the 1950s the figures reveal a dramatic drop (in official figures) with an annual growth rate of only 2.6% (75,200 in 1960).<sup>(2)</sup> The reason is that the 1950s saw the promulgation of a plethora of legislative acts affecting the presence of Africans in the urban areas. We will examine these laws and show how they conflicted with some of the interests of the manufacturing industry.

The most prominent government legislations after 1945, culminated in the promulgation of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act No. 52, 1951, which was intended to eliminate squatting in urban areas. It was followed by the Native Laws

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1. Republic of South Africa, Bureau of Statistics, Census Report No. 2/02/01, (1968). (Cited in Muthiene, Y), p.3.
  2. Ibid.

Amendment Act of 1952 which altered fundamentally Section 10 (1) of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945.<sup>(1)</sup> According to this legislation, it became an offence to be in an urban area for more than 72 hours unless the person was (a) born and permanently resident in the area, (b) employed by one employer continually for 10 years, or continually resident for 15 years in the area, (c) in possession of a permit for contract work. "This Act, together with The Native Urban Areas Consolidation Act, set up a comprehensive system for controlling and allocating African labour".<sup>(2)</sup> In accordance with the provisions of the 1952 legislation a system of labour bureaux, was instituted throughout South Africa. It was empowered to control the allocation of labour, especially African labour, to employers in urban areas. All work seekers were therefore obliged to register with the labour bureaux while urban employers registered all vacancies for African labour with their local labour bureaux. So the impact of the 1952 legislation was very remarkable in that it transformed all urban areas into proclaimed areas and made influx control obligatory. This policy, and the restrictions it imposed on urban access to migrant labour, conflicted in

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1. Literature reviewed in chapter 1 mentions some of these laws.
2. Giliomee, H. and Schlemmer, L.: Up Against the Fences; poverty, passes and privilege in South Africa, (New York, St. Martin Press, 1985), p.2.

many ways with the interests of manufacturing.

Other laws which followed included the Native Levy Act No. 64 of 1952.<sup>(1)</sup> It required employers of African labour to contribute financially towards transport, housing, health and infra-structure for Africans in urban areas. It therefore became the major bone of contention between the state and industrial capital, especially on the item concerning Native Housing. The industrialists argued that "Native Housing was a national problem, the obligations arising from which should be regarded as falling upon the entire community and not merely on employers alone. There would be a fundamental unfairness in compelling employers to bear a special responsibility for contributing to the costs of Native Housing".<sup>(2)</sup> Employers were only prepared to support the project on 'Native' Housing by "making deductions from the wages of 'native' employees to be paid over as contributions towards their rentals, but that in no other respect should employers be called upon to participate financially in any sub-economic scheme except as ordinary tax payers".<sup>(3)</sup> This shows that manufacturing industry's main priorities were profit oriented, whereas the state was bedevilled by its

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1. Cape Chamber of Industries (Minutes of Executive Council, 1949 - 1952).

2. Ibid., p.21.

Also see, The Star, 29/11/49.

3. Cape Chamber of Industries (CCI) (Minutes of Executive Council, 1949), p.21.

failures to resolve the urban housing crisis. (Manufacturing industry in Cape Town was predominantly small scale and localised, and was therefore operating at the margins of profitability given the competition with larger industries outside the Cape. The fact that small scale industries predominated in Cape Town even though the tendency in South Africa was towards concentration, serves to indicate the peculiarity of Cape Town.) The state was therefore inclined to use its power to force everyone to participate in this matter. Hence, despite strong opposition from industry, nationally, the Ministry of Native Affairs proposed to introduce provisions for compelling employers to pay 2/6d per week for each native employee, from which 3d might be put by the local authorities towards a 'transport pool' for subsidising native transport. The CCI maintained its argument that the problem was national in character and not sectional and therefore deserved thorough investigation.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1952, the government indicated that it did not intend proceeding with the legislation for native housing and transport levy, but instead intended to introduce a bill to provide for payment by employers or a levy which would be used to assist local authorities in the provision of amenities such as water, sewage, etc to "native" locations.<sup>(2)</sup> The reply of industry was that there was no distinction

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1. CCI, (Minutes of the Executive Council, 1949-1952).

2. Ibid.

between that and the original levy intended to subsidise the actual erection of houses. The crucial issue in this apparent conflict of interests between the state and organised industry was that it allowed the housing crisis to continue unresolved and the chances for peri-urban squatting to continue were maintained. *NR*

Of course the conflict of interests referred to should not be understood to mean that all interests of manufacturing capital conflicted with those of the state. The relationship was in many ways both functional and contradictory.

Functional in the sense that the state was committed to the task of providing industry with 'reasonable' amounts of cheap labour. The contradiction emerged because the state failed to recognise, firstly, the precarious conditions caused by increased competition between various industries during this period and the variety of interests among the urban employers of Black labour. Employers were interested in differentiated forms of labour power.<sup>(1)</sup> Employers' interests were divided between migrants and urban workers. But their preferences, as Posel argues, largely reflected stereotypes as they were not based on real work performance.<sup>(2)</sup> The state failed to

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1. Posel, D. : "Doing Business with the Pass Laws"

In this paper, differentiated forms of labour power is said to refer to questions of skill, literacy, semi-literacy, illiteracy which characterise differences between migrants and urban labour.

2. Ibid.

recognise this and through its Urban Labour Preference Policy, urban labour suppliers were restricted in order to avert agricultural labour shortages on white farms.<sup>(1)</sup> Industrialists were therefore compelled to exhaust urban labour sources while most of the migrant labour, which they sometimes preferred, was directed to white farms. This in itself contributed to the growth of squatting around Cape Town. Migrants who were forced to work on white farms could hardly stand the harshness of conditions there. This resulted in a situation where most of the labour force ran away to the cities for better salaries and chances of life. Some of these people joined the squatter communities on the margins of the city. Of course one cannot ignore the fact that many of these people fled to the city after having been displaced by the mechanisation of white agricultural farms.<sup>(2)</sup> During the period 1936 to 1951, it is estimated that the white farms and white rural areas contributed nearly half of the increase of the Urban African population.<sup>(3)</sup>

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In summary, there existed in Cape Town a situation characterised by the growth of secondary industry which

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1. Posel, D. : "Doing Business with the Pass Laws". pp.1-20
2. Kiewiet, K. and Wiechel, K.: Inside Crossroads,  
(Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980).
3. Giliomee, H. and Schlemmer, L.: Up Against the Fences,  
pp.2-3.

provided employment opportunities and thus acted as a pull factor attracting multitudes to the city whilst the deteriorating conditions of the reserves and mechanisation of white farms also pushed African people to the city. But the influx control policies of the state evaded this reality and exacerbated the problem of squatting as the definition of a 'legal Native' in the city was continuously narrowed. People without official authorisation to live and work in the city, squatted in the bushes and wherever land was available on the margins of the white city. They were vulnerable to the threats of being endorsed out of the city if discovered by the authorities. Employers whose interests in differentiated forms of labour were not accommodated by the policies of the state, had their chance. They used to their advantage the plight of the illegals. They employed them without exposing them, paying them abysmal wages for menial jobs.<sup>(1)</sup> A people with no other possibilities of employment or income tolerated these conditions and wages in order to establish their foothold in the city.

When the state adopted, in 1954, the Coloured Labour Preference Policy for the Western Cape, the plight of African people, especially the 'illegals', was further aggravated. The Minister of Native Affairs, announced in parliament that "the Western Cape was the preserve of the Coloureds and that

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1. Posel, D. : "Doing Business with the Pass Laws".

the construction of family houses for Africans was to cease".<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore, further immigration was to be restricted to migrant labourers, African families who had only recently entered the area were to be expelled and the application of pass laws was to be made stricter.<sup>(2)</sup> "In essence the policy was specifically aimed at curbing the number of Africans in the Western Cape".<sup>(3)</sup> Besides that, the policy was politically intended to separate Coloureds from Africans and thus avert the possible dangers of working-class unity. The issue of segregating Coloureds from African was made more urgent in the 1950s by the escalation of Black political mobilisation and resistance. Ostensibly, the reason put by the government was that "Natives were consorting with liquor sellers and with the lower type of Coloured women. The result was that a new Coloured race, slightly darker in colour, was being created".<sup>(4)</sup> Manufacturing capital was more concerned about the potential shortages of suitable labour

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1. Muthiene, Y. : "Pass Controls and Squatting in Cape Town during the 1950s", p.13.
2. Eiselen, W. : 'The Coloured and Native', (Unpublished paper in NAC, July 1955). (Also cited in Muthiene, Y.), p.14.
3. Muthien, Y. : "Pass Controls and Squatting in Cape Town during the 1950s", p.13.
4. Minister of Native Affairs , in the Cape Times, 28/03/1954.



that were to accrue as a result of this policy. Dr. Verwoed, Minister of Native Affairs, tried to assure the Cape Chamber of Industries that he "would not induce sudden changes or adopt an unreasonable attitude towards the needs of industry and that an adequate pool of Native labour would always be retained".<sup>(1)</sup> However, with the tightening up of influx control in 1957, the CCI complained of inadequate labour supplies, pointing out that industry in the Western Cape was being unfairly disadvantaged by the Coloured Labour Preference Policy. All in all the Coloured Labour Preference Policy widened the rift between industrialists and the state and contributed on the other hand to the growth of the number of Africans in squatter camps.

X At this juncture I would like to draw connections between Native wages and the growth of peri-urban squatting during the period 1945 to 1960. Most of the literature on peri-urban squatting mentions the point of poor wages but I feel it is never exhausted enough and is therefore not accorded the status it deserves. When carefully examined the issue of wages can be more revealing of the economic injustices underpinning the problem of peri-urban squatting. In Cape

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1. Cited in Goldin, I.: "The Poverty of Coloured Labour Preference: economy and ideology in the Western Cape", (Unpublished Paper written for South African Labour Development and Research Unit, Cape Town, 1984), p.18.

Town, for example, the wage structure before and during 1945 to 1960 is characterised by better salaries for European workers and poor salaries for Coloureds and Natives. But the Coloured workers earned better salaries than the Native workers even before the Coloured Labour Preference Policy was overtly adopted by the state. For example, during the early 1930s the South African Railways paid married Coloured unskilled workers, a maximum daily rate of 4s 6d and their unmarried counterparts only 4 shillings. "Native labour received lower rates regardless of marital status. Europeans received a minimum daily wage of 3s, those under 21 years of age were offered between 3s 6d and 4s 6d and those over 21 years got 5s but with the important perk of free quarters".<sup>(1)</sup> During the period 1945 to 1960, this trend in wage levels continued. The figure below illustrates this point in detail:

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1. Report of Inter Departmental Committee on Labour Resources of the Union, 1930, pp.28ff.

SALARIES AND WAGES PAID IN PRIVATE INDUSTRY 1945-55<sup>(1)</sup>  
(Western Cape)

<u>TABLE 1</u>		Number of Employees		Salaries and wages paid (in pounds)	
YEARS	No of Establishments	Euro-peans	non-Euro-peans	Europeans	non-Europeans
1944-45	1,446	19,923	49,586	6,996,549	7,006,209
1945-46	1,470	20,766	50,644	7,440,104	7,610,561
1946-47	1,501	22,638	54,238	8,745,048	8,573,138
1947-48	1,792	25,386	63,067	10,558,194	10,542,123
1948-49	1,859	27,407	68,607	12,228,871	12,025,586
1949-50	1,928	27,186	69,697	12,765,515	12,248,395
1950-51	1,873	27,741	103,039	13,972,000	27,842,000
1951-52	1,899	27,917	106,913	15,792,000	31,688,000
1952-53	1,833	28,578	107,165	17,573,000	34,403,000
1953-54	1,855	28,278	107,972	18,513,000	36,126,000
1954-55	1,292	22,009	90,102	15,945,000	30,910,000

<u>TABLE 2</u>	Average annual wages per European	Average monthly wages per European	Average annual wages per non-European	Average monthly wages per non-European	Difference between European and non-European
YEARS					
1944-45	351	29	141	11	18
1945-46	358	30	150	12	18
1946-47	386	32	158	13	19
1947-48	416	35	167	14	21
1948-49	446	37	175	15	22
1949-50	469	39	176	15	24
1950-51	503	42	270	22	20
1951-52	566	47	296	24	23
1952-53	615	51	321	27	24
1953-54	654	54	334	28	26
1954-55	724	60	343	26	34

1. NB.: See footnote 1 in the next page.

As shown in Table 2, during the years 1945 to 1948 the difference in average monthly wages between each European and 'non-European' varied between 18 and 19 pounds but after 1948 to 1955 the difference in wages rose tremendously to between 21 to 34 pounds. Whereas in Table 1, it is shown that Black employment growth outstripped that of whites, especially during the period 1948 to 1954, white wages rose remarkably faster than those of Blacks. This was obviously due to discriminatory legislations in the labour market. The period 1948 to 1955 is described by Hindson as the immediate period of Nationalist Party victory, the only period after the war during which Black wages, nationally, showed a sharp relative and absolute decline, especially in manufacturing industry.<sup>(2)</sup> But in the Western Cape, the trend seems to have

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1. Figures in the table 1 are original figures from the Industrial Census Reports and Special Reports ie. UG. No. 50/1949 : Census of Industrial Establishments 1945-46; 1946-47, 30th Industrial Census, 1947-48, 31st Industrial Census  
1948-49, 32nd Industrial Census  
1949-50, 33rd Industrial Census.  
From 1950 to 1955 records available are Special Reports. Whereas the figures in table 2 have been calculated from the annual figures outlined in table 1. The problem with the use of Industrial Censuses is not only their bias in favour of secondary industry but also the manner of recording which changes from time to time. After 1949 for instance, the Industrial Censuses are less regionally specific. They focus more on districts and the value of commodities produced by the various sectors of manufacturers and this is done in Afrikaans which presents serious problems for those to whom it is a second language.
2. Hindson, D.C.: 'The Economic Dualism and Labour Reallocation in South Africa, 1917-70', (MA. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1974). (Cited in Bloch, G.), p.217.

been fairly different. As Table 2 (in page 80) shows, after 1948 there was no sharp decline in Black wages but a slow rise, which could not match the rapid rise of white wages. So the example of the Western Cape demonstrates that the idea of a sharp decline in Black wages after 1948, even though it holds a considerable degree of truth, cannot be generalised to all parts of the country. On its own, it can hardly provide an adequate explanation of the growth of peri-urban squatting in Cape Town during this period.

Even before the period 1948/55, Cape Town's labour, particularly its unskilled workforce, was earning quite significantly higher wages than in other areas. "The average wage paid to Native workers was 64 pounds for Cape Town industry compared to 50 pounds on the Rand and in Port Elizabeth and only 43 pounds in Durban".<sup>(1)</sup> Oral information also supports the idea of better wages in Cape Town.<sup>(2)</sup> Nonetheless, this does not erase the fact that, in the final analysis, Black wages in Cape Town were poor but better when

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1. Walker, A.: "Out on a Limb - The Economy of Cape Town, 1934 to 1941", (Unpublished Paper submitted to the Cape Town History Project, 9 September 1990), p.44.
  2. For example, an interview with Mr A.N. Zondani, Washington Street, Langa, 1989, confirms this; he left Port Elizabeth and came to work in Cape Town because of better wages in the latter place in 1944.

compared to other regions. This cautions us not to be misled by the high average wage rates for 'non-Europeans' shown in the Industrial Censuses. The fact that the Industrial Censuses indicate an 'average wage', creates a problem in itself because variations in wage structure (ie. differences between wages for Indians, Coloureds, Africans) are disguised and different levels of skill are not reflected. The notion of 'average wage', also disguises the fact that the majority of workers were probably paid less than the figures given, especially those who lived 'illegally' in the Peninsula. Even the oral information indicates that in spite of better wages in Cape Town, it remains true that all were poverty wages.<sup>(1)</sup> Otherwise it would be difficult to reconcile high 'Native' wages in Cape Town with the pervasiveness of conditions of poverty and acute housing shortages which affected the ranks of the Black working people.

With the poor wages earned, Black people in Cape Town could hardly afford the minimum expenditure necessary to provide

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1. See interviews with Mr Mntengwana, G., Nyanga East,  
October, 1990.

Mr Zondani, A., Langa, 1989.

Mr Khupe, C.M., Langa, 1989.

NB. The point about illegality has been made but writers have not sufficiently emphasised the question of poverty.

rudimentary housing facilities, basic sanitary and health services, or even a balanced diet, hence the growth of squatting. With the tightening up of influx control measures, life in the established Black townships became more difficult to endure, especially on the part of the 'illegals'.

Squatting in the bushes and behind the sand dunes was thus their alternative. Population increases in the already established Black townships also added another dimension to the problem. It led to the overcrowding of houses of friends, relatives and the barracks where single male workers lived.<sup>(1)</sup> This served to create slum conditions and exacerbated an already growing squatter problem. Nonetheless, the buck of urban 'Native' Housing, remained for a long time being passed between the Department of Native Affairs, local authorities and the manufacturing industry.

All in all, the essential argument of this chapter is that the intermingling of legislation and poverty was the most fundamental issue and the particular nature of squatting in Cape Town reflected and confirmed this. The conditions of inadequacy of pay, and racial legislations were further

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1. This idea came out of an interview with Mr Magaqa - No. 52

Moshesh Street, Langa Township, November 1989.

The City of Cape Town, Mayor's Minutes : M.O.H.

Reports, 1960 and 1961, show in detail the extent of population growth in Langa Township.

aggravated by periodic economic disturbances after this period of research. This led immediately to widespread unemployment which seemed ultimately to leave behind an increasing number of persons for whom no employment whatsoever could be found.<sup>(1)</sup> This led to another wave of increase of squatter settlements in Cape Town and other cities of South Africa after 1960. But a rapidly growing contribution to the seriousness of the problem has always been made by the continual drift of the rural population to such areas.<sup>(2)</sup> In the chapters that follow some of the points raised here will be elucidated.

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1. During the period 1970 to 1983, South Africa's economy was marked by contradictions and social conflicts generated by structural conditions of cheap wage labour all interpenetrated by the World economic crisis. This is indicated in the Frank Talk, Vol 2, (1982), 16. There, it is also indicated that there was an actual decline in the gross domestic product in South Africa, especially in the early 1980s.
2. Lunn, W.S. and Dawson, L.F.: "The Burden of Sub-economic Housing", (Unpublished Paper presented to the Conference of Municipal and Country Engineers, Johannesburg, May 1938), p.3.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE LOCATION, COMPOSITION AND GROWTH OF SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS IN CAPE TOWN, 1945 - 1960

"For every native coming to Cape Town for work who is housed there are two who are homeless. They have been arriving at the rate of 3,000 to 4,000 a year, and for the unlucky majority - now more than 25,000 men, apart from women and children - there is nothing but the bleak alternative of a draughty, leaky hovel on waterlogged wasteland when winter comes."<sup>(1)</sup> This comment appeared in an article titled 'Plight of the Homeless Natives in the City' in the Cape Argus, July 1950. It highlighted the extent of the past housing problem and the subsequent growth of peri-urban squatting.

In this chapter, I will firstly attempt to define a squatter settlement. In the light of that definition squatter settlements which existed in Cape Town during this period of research will be identified and classified. But in its essence, the chapter focusses on the location, composition, internal organisation and growth of various squatter communities around the city. A comparison, however brief, is also made with the squatter settlements in Johannesburg.

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1. Cape Argus, July, 14, 1950.

One of the several ways of defining a squatter settlement is that it refers to aggregates of 'houses' built on lands not belonging to the householders, but invaded by squatters, sometimes in individual household groups, sometimes in collective action. "Such possession with respect of lands held without title indicates the use of the term "squatter".<sup>(1)</sup> This definition expresses correctly how the situation was in Cape Town until May 1948. After this date a squatter settlement could no longer be defined in 'traditional' terms because of the changes which took place. I will first highlight the situation before this date and then show the change which occurred afterwards.

In Cape Town before May 1948, reports abound about "natives pouring into the Peninsula to look for work and unable to find accommodation" and as a result "erecting pondokkies willy-nilly on anybody's land in defiance of law"<sup>(2)</sup> As reported in the Cape Argus, the pondokkies were going up so fast "that by the time the municipal officials arrive to order their demolition they are already occupied and occupants refuse to move".<sup>(3)</sup> According to the report of the Cape Times, they were also springing up like mushrooms,

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1. United Nations' Centre for Human Settlements, "The Residential Circumstances of the Urban Poor in Developing Countries", (United States, 1981), p.22.
2. Cape Argus, 17/5/1945.
3. Ibid.

"occupied by a very undesirable type of coloured person".<sup>(1)</sup>

So these settlements fitted neatly into the definition of a squatter settlement given above because they were settlements built on land which was invaded and occupied without 'title'. The increase in the number of such dwellings and the health threat they posed to the city of Cape Town, forced the authorities to make an intervention. Hence in May 1948, at a conference involving the Cape Town City Council, Cape Divisional Council, National Housing and Planning Commission, Native Commissioner, (Cape Town) and others, it was decided that steps should be taken to allow 'native' squatting to take place on approved sites where sanitary services and water could be supplied. The government also indicated its preparedness to subsidise local authorities in providing such temporary squatting sites. These sites were to be obtained by expropriating some of the properties on which illicit squatting was taking place.<sup>(2)</sup> This arrangement was to continue until such time as permanent housing facilities were made available. Only 'legal natives' (in terms of Section 10 of the Urban Areas Act, No. 25, 1945 and later Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952) were allowed to squat under this scheme. What is important about this arrangement is that it changed the character of squatting and influenced as well the definition of a squatter settlement. Squatting could no

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1. Cape Times, 20/3/1946.

2. Cape Times, 27/4/1948

longer be explained as meaning 'invasion of pieces of land, occupied without title', but instead it referred to the occupation of the pieces of land by homeless people, without title to it, but permitted by the city's authorities.

But after 1948 a number of Africans who had not fulfilled the requirements set in the Native legislations of 1945 and later 1952, to be in the city, erected their shacks in bushes, hidden from view and paid no rent. In other words they continued to invade pieces of land, which did not belong to them, illegally, in that way defining themselves as a distinctive category within the squatter population. The secretive and mobile nature of this group of squatters has made it difficult for historians to quantify and study them in order to develop any detailed understanding of their lives. In this instance it is through oral information that such knowledge is made available.

An example of a squatter camp which fell under this category was Brown squatter camp which existed in the 1950s. The camp was named after a shop which belonged to Mr Brown, built along the Lansdowne Road.<sup>(1)</sup> Behind the shop there was a thick forest and it was in the centre of that forest that the camp was erected. This camp was inhabited mainly by the 'illegals' who could be classified into two groups (i) those

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1. Interview with Mrs Jafta, Site B, Khayelitsha, May 1991.

who according to the stipulations of the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952, had no right to be in the city (ii) those who at some stage had rights to be in the city according to Section 10(i) of the Native Laws Amendment Act but had forfeited them because of reasons like being out of the city and out of employment for a period of a year or more. A good example is the case of Mr Jafta and his wife, still living in a shack even today. In 1959 Mr Jafta had spent about 45 years of work in Cape Town without visiting the Transkei. He decided in that same year to visit his relatives and spend about a year with them in the Transkei. When he returned to Cape Town in 1959 it was discovered by the authorities here (because of the Transkei stamp on his pass-book) that he had been away from the city and out of employment for about a year. Because of that he forfeited all his rights to be in the city. Together with his wife and children they were endorsed out of the city and were forced to destroy their shack, erected in a legal squatter camp called Dutch in Nyanga African Township. Mrs Jafta still remembers very well this incident when she says that "We were told to destroy the pondokkie; "we will destroy it and go where white man?", and that white man called Erasmus said, "Hy kan gaan waar jy wil"." (1) The case of this family is an example of how some Africans were reduced to 'illegal' status and then thrown into a more secretive and illegal form of

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1. Interview with Mrs Jafta.

squatting. In some cases the settlements inhabited by this category of squatters were only up in the evenings only to disappear before sunset.<sup>(1)</sup>

This form of squatting was especially prevalent after 1948 because the government was geared more towards fighting the problem of squatting around greater Cape Town and thus limit the size of the Black population in the city.<sup>(2)</sup> This reflected another element in the National Party's ideological concern. According to the National Party, Cape Town was the oldest area of white settlement, "the only place where whites had arrived before black skinned Africans. 'Cleaning' the Western Cape would be a way for whites to reclaim what was rightfully theirs".<sup>(3)</sup> But evidence which exists hardly demonstrates their success in this regard; the crisis was exacerbated instead, hence the number of squatter settlements and the people living in them increased remarkably. By the time the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, 25,000 of the 36,000 Africans in the city were living in one of

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1. Interview with Mrs Sighaza, Site B, Khayelitsha, 1991.
2. According to Budow M, other reasons for the prevalence of this form of squatting included the expensiveness of the higher purchase sale of land to squatters as well as security considerations.
2. Silk, A : A Shanty Town in South Africa; the Story of Modderdam, p.68.

approximately 30 squatter camps around the city.<sup>(1)</sup> After 1948, the situation became worse. In 1950 for instance, it is said that there were more than 25,000 men apart from the 5,000 families, including 10,000 to 20,000 children, who lived as squatters around the city of Cape Town.<sup>(2)</sup> (It is unfortunate that one cannot find specific statistical data to demonstrate how many people were thrown into more secret and illegal form of squatting after 1948).

Under the new government attempts were made not only to fight off peri-urban squatting but also to put it under control. In line with the agreements reached on the 1st May 1948, the Urban Areas Inspectorate of the Native Affairs Department persuaded the various municipalities to accept the temporary presence of squatters in their areas "and to cease demolishing shacks already existing, whilst prohibiting, except under permit, the erection of new ones".<sup>(3)</sup> The

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1. Silk, A : A Shanty Town in South Africa; the Story of Modderdam, p.68.  
In J. Cole's book titled 'Crossroads', the figure is even more than 25,000; it goes up to 150,000. This shows the problem of statistics when it comes to dealing with the number of squatters.
  2. Cape Argus, July, 14, 1950.
  3. Lipschitz, M, and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatter camp', Race Relations Journal, XXI, No. 4, (1954), p.2.

Municipality of Goodwood is one example of this situation. It was persuaded not to demolish a chain of squatter camps spread over Eureka Estate where over a thousand families lived in the 1950s.

So, under the National Party government, squatting was strictly limited to specific sites, rented from private land owners or small plots purchased on a hire-purchase basis (by the City Council). It is this form of squatting which predominated in Cape Town and most written sources, both primary and secondary, concentrate on it. Some of the squatter settlements of this type intermingled with formal residences in the locations or townships. An example which can be cited is a squatter camp which existed (in the present day NY 5) in Gugulethu in the late 1950s.<sup>(1)</sup> (Squatters from this camp were later resettled in formal houses which were built in Gugulethu Township). Besides this camp other squatter settlements of this type included Dutch squatter camp. This squatter camp was established in 1956 opposite Kraaifontein (which was also a squatter camp) but very close to the present day Maumau, the oldest section of Nyanga African Township. Dutch squatter camp was comprised largely of Africans who had been moved from squatter camps in Elsies River and Bellville, following the Group Areas Act in 1952. Most of the residents of this camp were later accommodated in

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1. Interview with Mrs Zinto, Gugulethu, August 1990.



Nyanga Township in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>(1)</sup> The 'illegal' Africans also erected their shacks in the controlled squatter camps hence the size of these settlements grew very remarkably over the period. Frequent raids by the police were encouraged by the government to chase away the 'illegals' and check illegal activities like beer brewing and shebeens.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Medical Officer of Health of the City and Divisional Councils provided the City Council with a fairly comprehensive list of squatting sites in 1942. These included, Rugby, Brooklyn, Swartdam, Belgravia, Prospect, Forbes, Glenview, Rylands, Doorhogte, Welcome, Kromboom, Meadows, Hampton, Surrey, Parkwood, "Lots 5", Rondevlei, Blaauvlei, Iifracombe, Vrygron. These were, supposedly, under the City Council. Under the Cape Divisional Council were Goodwood Acres, Grassypark, Elsies Rivier, Bellville Flats and Windermere.<sup>(3)</sup> Some of these areas (eg. Windermere, Raapkraal, Blaauvlei, etc.) continued as major squatting sites in Cape Town during the period under discussion experiencing considerable increases and decreases in the number of their inhabitants. Other squatter camps which came to public notice

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1. Interview with Mrs Jafta.

2. Interview with Mrs Zinto.

3. UG No. 18, 1943, Cape Flats Commission, p.14. (Cited in Budow, M.), p.56.

after 1942 included, Raapkraal, situated between the Westlake Golf Course and the Muizenberg Main Road, under Divisional Council.<sup>(1)</sup> According to a report from the Cape Times, the number of inhabitants of this camp was approximately 1,000 during the year 1948.<sup>(2)</sup> Pondokkies between Langa and Athlone off the Klipfontein Road totalled about 5,000, for the Welcome, Yorkshire Estates and Jakkalsvlei in 1950.<sup>(3)</sup> Hundreds of other pondokkies existed in the woods along the upper fringe of the city above Oranjezicht, Vredhoek and De Waal Drive (ie. on Table Mountain and Devils Peak).<sup>(4)</sup> According to the Cape Argus these pondokkies occupied the entire mountain slopes, stretching from the Marine Estates land right across till a point above De Waal Drive.<sup>(5)</sup> On the pavement of Buiten Street and Loop Street, within the city itself, there were shacks erected by a group of homeless people.<sup>(6)</sup> All this shows the alarming heights to which the problem of squatting had developed.

One would expect that at least the plight of city squatters would have triggered quick reaction on the part of

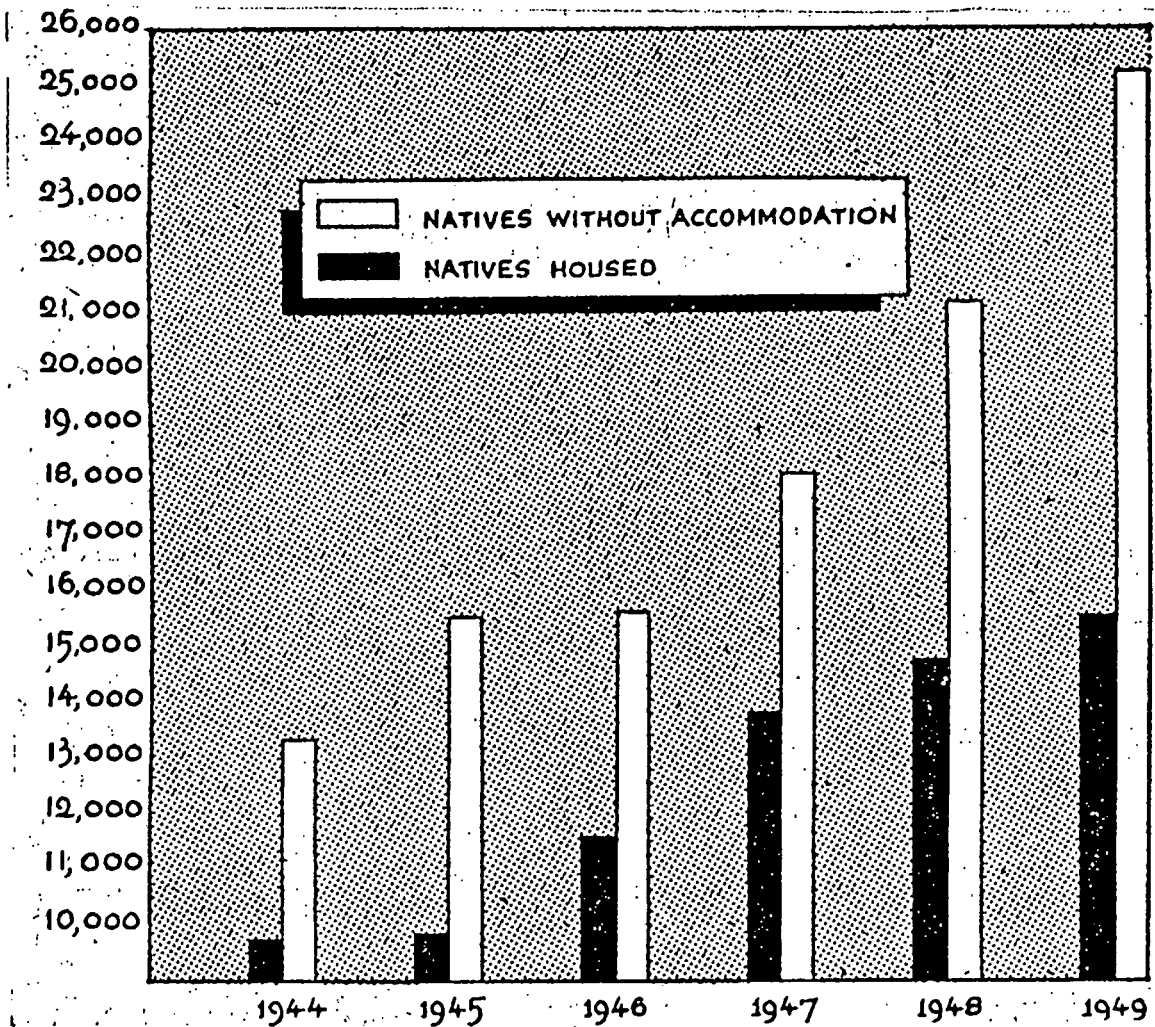
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1. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.56.
  2. Cape Times, 31/12/1947, 03/01/1948.
  3. Cape Argus 14/07/1950
  4. Cape Times 20/03/1946.
  5. Cape Argus 04/04/1946.
  6. Cape Argus 27/11/1947.

authorities. But, on the contrary, each authority controlling the law and social way of civic existence in Cape Town took one frightened peep at the unsightly and unhygienic assembly on the kerb-side. Each piously persuaded itself that nothing could be done "within the orbit of its particular authority".<sup>(1)</sup> In fact this summarises the tendency of the usual responses of city authorities to the plight of squatters in Cape Town during this period.

The number of squatters in the Northern Suburbs around Tiervlei also grew tremendously. Their numbers were said to run into many thousands.<sup>(2)</sup> Superficially this situation was a result of the fact that population increase caused mainly by the inflow of people from the reserves and other areas around Cape Town was matched by a corresponding insufficient construction of suitable dwellings. The gap between the housed and the homeless was very wide, especially during the period under discussion.

\*\*\*\* (See graph in the following page<sup>(3)</sup> )

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1. Cape Argus 27/11/1947.
  2. Cape Times 08/11/47.
  3. Cape Argus 14/07/50.



*Cape Town's losing battle to provide housing for its fast-growing Native population is illustrated in this diagram. With sub-economic building at a standstill, the gap between accommodation available and accommodation wanted is expected to be even greater at the end of this year. The figures above refer only to Native men.*

During the chosen period of this research, it was mainly Coloured and African people who inhabited miserable hovels and shanties on the margins of the City of Cape Town. (Most Africans came from the Transkei, Ciskei and other areas outside the Eastern Cape.) Even during the early years, as far back as 1835, peri-urban squatting around Greater Cape Town correlated positively with race. In other words, those people, not classified as white or European constituted the squatter population around the city. This besides showing the positive correlation between poverty and race, also demonstrated the coincidence of class formation and race particularly at the bottom levels of the society of Cape Town.<sup>(1)</sup> In most squatter settlements Coloureds and Africans lived together but some were occupied either predominantly by Africans or Coloureds. One example of a predominantly African squatter settlement was Raapkraal whereas Windermere was predominantly a Coloured squatter camp.<sup>(2)</sup> Other predominantly African squatter settlements were the temporary settlements erected after the Group Areas Act was passed in 1950. Most of these were either almost purely African settlements or Coloured settlements. They occurred

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1. Elphick, R. and Giliomee, H. : 'The origins and entrenchment of European dominance at the Cape, 1652-1840' in Elphick, R. and Giliomee, H. (eds.), The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840, (Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 1989), pp.522-561.

2. Cape Argus 30/12/47.

as part of the government scheme to separate Africans from Coloureds. But on the whole the most dominant trend in squatter settlements, especially before the Group Areas Act, was mixed squatting (i.e. Coloureds and Africans lived together).<sup>(1)</sup> Another interesting example of a predominantly African squatter settlement was at the Eureka Estate. It was part of Goodwood Municipality. Its location reflected security concerns in that it was situated 200 yards from the tarred road and was hidden by shrub and bush.<sup>(2)</sup> What is interesting about the camp is the ethnic arrangement it displayed in its internal organisation.

The camp was divided into two sections, ie., Xhosa speaking

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1. The estimations from the paper read by Dr W.W.M. Eiselen, titled 'Natives in the Western Cape', are that out of about 4,000 families in squatter camps in the Cape Peninsula, there were 50 Union Natives, 150 Foreign Natives and 75 Basotho Natives, who were living with or married to Coloured women. This demonstrates the fact that squatter communities were mixed between Coloureds and Africans. Of course these estimation may not be precise but they capture the general picture of the situation.
2. Lipschitz, M, and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatter camp', Race Relations Journal, XXI, No. 4, (1954), pp. 1-38.

section and Sotho speaking section. The Xhosa speaking section was called Marabastad and the Sotho speaking sections were called Maseru and Herschel. One can correctly guess that the Xhosa speaking section of the squatter camp was named after Marabi culture which predominated in Johannesburg's shanty settlements during the same period. Whereas the Basotho sections were named after the capital town of Lesotho, which is Maseru, and Herschel, a predominantly Sotho speaking village in Transkei. Mrs Jafta, who lived in Marabastad in the 1950s still remembers that they lived peacefully with their Sotho speaking fellow squatters. As she puts it, "we lived peacefully, there were no fights".<sup>(1)</sup>

Most squatter camps displayed a tendency to be close to where industries were located. Budow describes that as "a coincidence" between the location of industries and the location of squatter camps.<sup>(2)</sup> "Initially established at the city centre, from the beginning of World War I industries began to extend outwards along the Southern Suburbs' Main Road route towards Simonstown. Correspondingly squatter settlements, first established near the centre of Cape Town, were later to be found along the route to Simonstown,

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1. Interview with Mrs Jafta.

2. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.53.

particularly around Retreat".<sup>(1)</sup> The emergence and rapid growth of a squatter settlement at Windermere from the mid-1930s, actually coincided with the development of factories in the Maitland area and Kensington.<sup>(2)</sup> Even during the period 1945 to 1960, squatter settlements in Cape Town preserved this trend. Squatter sites in the Welcome, Yorkshire Estates and Jakkalsvlei, off Clipfontein Road demonstrated strategic location in relation to places of employment in Goodwood, Athlone, etc. This demonstrates the fact that these communities were communities of working people and closeness to work place was an important consideration in their location.<sup>(3)</sup> The Fagan Commission of 1948 also stated : "Where we were able to make enquiries, however the real nucleus of squatters' villages appeared, generally speaking, to be formed by people who have work in the neighbourhood but cannot find accommodation".<sup>(4)</sup> Presumably the situation was similar to that found in 1940 in a survey conducted in Parkwood Estate (also a squatting

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1. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.53.
2. Ibid.
3. This is confirmed in Whittingale's thesis titled, 'The Development and Location of Industries in Greater Cape Town, 1652 - 1972', (M.A. Thesis, UCT, 1973), where it is indicated that the number of squatters living in Northern Suburbs increased after the war due to the rapid industrial development taking place in these areas.
4. UG No.28, 1948, Report of the Native Laws Commission, 1946-48, p.18.



site). According to the Parkwood survey, it was found that 87% of family heads amongst the squatters were employed, those without occupations mainly because of old age or sickness.<sup>(1)</sup> About 81% of men employed were involved in unskilled employment ranging from hawking to caddying and garage hands. Some 15% were employed for semi-skilled jobs such as lorry driving, plumbing, painting, and only three percent had skilled jobs like carpentry and engine shunting.<sup>(2)</sup> The majority of those involved in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs earned less than 2 pounds per week and the remainder earned between 2.5 pounds to 4.10 pounds per week.<sup>(3)</sup> During the period 1945 to 1960, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, nothing had significantly changed in the economic position of squatters. In Windermere for instance, it was found in a survey conducted in the 1950s that 87% of African males over 15 years, and 82% of Coloured

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1. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town',

pp.60-61.

Of course one should recognise that in the course of time things changed; unemployment became rife especially in the late 1950s. In the squatter camps there were a number of able bodied men who stayed unemployed. This is suggested in an interview with Mrs Jafta.

2. Rubkin, P. : 'A Socio-economic Study of Parkwood Estate',

1940, p.50-67 (Information also stated in Budow), p.61.

3. Budow, M.: 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town',

pp.61-62.

males over 15 years, were employed but badly paid.<sup>(1)</sup> "People were employed on the docks, at the abattoirs, Wingfield Areodrome, factories in Maitland, Salt River and Woodstock and in the building industry as labourers or, as in the case of many "Coloureds", as artisans."<sup>(2)</sup> So the picture which emerges from these facts is not of unemployment (on the part of squatters) but of underemployment, instead. Their earnings remained poor and this had a variety of implications for their lives which will be clearly examined in the following chapter which deals with the issues of health among the squatter communities.

What we will consider at this point is the internal organisation of squatter communities. What were the relations of power among the squatters themselves; who ruled who and in what ways? These are very interesting questions especially for the situation in Cape Town. In Johannesburg, for instance, during this period, squatter communities displayed a high degree of internal organisation. They organised themselves into movements led by distinguished leaders and committees. One such leader was James Mpanza who organised his movement as Sofasonke Party: another was Schreiner

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1. City of Cape Town: Housing Committee Minutes, March 1946  
(Addendum) Also stated in Swart, C.C., pp.40-42.
  2. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb',  
p.40.

Baduza, who organised squatting as a deliberate strategy in the political struggles of the poor.<sup>(1)</sup> The squatter leadership in this area, often cast in a messianic role, had enormous power and influence over their followers. "They issued squatter 'permits' for a fee. They had an organisation which regulated entry to the camps, expelled non-members, administered facilities, and punished offenders against regulations with fines and beatings. All outsiders, including for example, 'European newspaper reporters', were subjected to their discipline. They also controlled trading in the areas and charged traders a fee for the right to enter the camps".<sup>(2)</sup> This shows the extent to which the power of squatter leaders had advanced and it rendered in many instances, the effective power of the state null and void.

It was only after 1948, with the tightening up of influx control measures and pass laws that the state began pulling the balance of forces in its favour. Through the development of 'controlled' squatter camps, the state attempted to break the power of squatter leadership. Under this system, land and services were made available to "10,000 squatter families who had to pay a composite fee of 15 shillings per month for

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1. Stadler, A.W. : 'Birds in the Cornfield; squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947', p.94.

2. Ibid., p.105.

these facilities".<sup>(1)</sup> In that way, Stadler argues that the state undermined the role of squatter leaders as providers of 'housing', and a measure of security and protection.<sup>(2)</sup> The state combined its ability to provide better facilities with the use of force and coercion to move people into 'controlled' squatter camps. This involved co-operation between the municipality and South African police.

In Cape Town, even though there were similarities with the situation we have just described in Johannesburg, the situation was at the same time different. Firstly there is no indication, even from oral sources, that squatter communities in Cape Town were as organised, under a distinguished charismatic leadership, as was the case in Johannesburg. Instead what Lipschitz and Greschoff exposed when they examined the situation of squatters in Eureka Estates is that the squatter communities in Cape Town, as a whole, changed very constantly, and members, continuously aware of the impermanence of their communities, hardly established a thoroughly organised community life.<sup>(3)</sup> Oral information

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1. Stadler, A.W. : 'Birds in the Cornfield; squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947', p.101.
2. Ibid., p.101-102.
3. Lipschitz, M, and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatter camp', pp.1-38.

also confirms some of these points. With the absence of a distinguished leadership among the squatters themselves, the main sources of authority were the local administration, the landlord and his representative in the camp. For order and discipline in the camps, people relied on the authority of elders.<sup>(1)</sup> One would wonder why the situation in Cape Town was like that. Although the available evidence is fragmentary, what bits can be pieced together reveal some of the important issues in this regard. Firstly, squatter communities in Cape Town were not only numerically inferior but also less heterogenous in composition as compared to Johannesburg. This is not surprising given the central position of the latter in the economy of South Africa. As a result the numerical superiority and diversity of ethnic composition of squatter communities around Johannesburg, while it fostered a variety of discords and strains was also a source of strength. Against the social tensions and conflicts brought by heterogeneity, was balanced the residents' awareness of the need to preserve the land acquired for squatting. To achieve this, a certain measure of unity needed to be maintained against all diversity. Through a charismatic leadership, they instituted structures necessary for the reduction of conflicts amongst themselves. In addition to that, despite ethnic diversity, squatters in

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1. This is reflected in the interviews with Mrs Zinto,  
Mr Maya, and Mrs Jafta.

Johannesburg were all Africans, therefore culturally they had several meeting points. They could and were able, apparently, to establish a familiar idiom to hold them together.

The situation of squatters in Cape Town lacked these qualities. Their population was constituted predominantly by Coloured people especially before 1945. After this date, in the late 1940s and 1950s, African squatters grew in numbers. The latter involved a very large Xhosa speaking group from the Eastern Cape and few people from areas outside. Most of these people maintained strong ties with the reserves. Besides the Xhosa speaking group there were also the 'Basothos' and a few Africans from outside the Union.<sup>(1)</sup> So in terms of numbers and diversity of ethnic composition, African squatters in Cape Town lagged behind their Johannesburg counterparts. The 'Coloureds' who at the same time constituted a sizeable percentage of the squatter population contributed towards the emergence of a unique dimension in the squatter communities of Cape Town. They differed from Africans in terms of language and culture and were closer instead to Europeans (especially the Afrikaners). This contributed towards creating a communication gap which also resulted in divisions amongst the squatter communities

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1. Eiselen, W.W. M. : 'Natives in the Western Cape', p.3.

in Cape Town.<sup>(1)</sup> It is difficult to assess the extent to which this might have been the cause of friction or tension between the two groups (ie., Coloureds and Africans in squatter camps). This is because of the fact that, the people I interviewed emphasize that they lived together peacefully (See interviews provided in the appendix). But in reality, this cannot be taken to discount the fact that there must have been tensions between these groups in the squatter camps, let alone the tendency of old people to glorify their early days. Coloured people were not only "culturally" different from Africans, but some had fairly better living conditions than most Africans since they were longer established in some of the squatter camps (eg. Windermere). Presumably there must have been conflicts around this.

The intentions of the government after 1948 to make Cape Town a model zone of apartheid, was another factor which put squatters around the city on a difficult terrain. This meant that squatters around Cape Town could not have enough chance to organise themselves along similar lines like in Johannesburg. Frequent police raids never allowed them a chance to weave together their diversity and entrench a squatter tradition to hold them together. Of course the

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1. This is assumed on the basis of oral information. Which indicates the tendency amongst <sup>Squatters</sup> to cluster according to ethnic origins or language.

cultural activities which could be expected to have united these communities did not have a stabilising effect. They actually fitted with the mobile nature and impermanence of these communities. In chapter 6 some of these cultural activities are thoroughly explored.

In summary, the squatter communities in Cape Town were constantly mobile, unstable and less organised, especially when compared with their counterparts in Johannesburg. The kind of communities the squatters formed were characterised by the constant coming in of new members and departure of old ones.<sup>(1)</sup> Oral information also confirms this. Mrs Jafta's family for instance, who squatted in the 1950s, hardly stayed for longer than two years in one camp without moving to another. Whereas in Johannesburg, even though squatter communities were also mobile, their mobility was organised, ie. they moved as organised groups, movements or parties under a distinguished leadership. In other words squatter movements in Johannesburg displayed a more conscious effort to assert control over their circumstances. One should understand this in the light of the advantages they had over their counterparts in Cape Town. Squatter settlements in the latter were also very scattered in their location and thus difficult to organise into coherent movements. This in

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1. Lipschitz, M, and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatter camp', pp.1-38.



combination with other factors stated above made the squatter movements in Cape Town weaker than in Johannesburg.

To conclude the chapter has demonstrated the extent to which peri-urban squatting had grown around the City of Cape Town during the period of research. It highlights important considerations in the location of squatter settlements and identifies sites which existed during the period under research. Most of the settlements mentioned here never existed until the end of the period of this research. The forced removals and re-settlements which occurred especially in the late 1950s changed the face of the location of these communities. For instance the people of Windermere were moved to an industrial location called Factreton<sup>(1)</sup> whereas other squatters from Elsies River, Bellville, etc., were moved to temporary squatter camps following the Group Areas Act of 1950. One of the features of squatter communities in Cape Town was their ability to grow quickly and spread. This forced the authorities in Cape Town to consider ways of controlling squatting as it posed a threat to the city (this was in the form of numbers of shacks and shack dwellers and the implications this had for general health of the urban society). Hence the idea of 'controlled' squatting was implemented. It was indeed, tacitly a temporary recognition of the presence of squatters in the city. But at the same

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1. Cape Times, 6/08/54.

time the government used this scheme as a way of tracking the 'illegals' out of the city and keeping the Black squatter population in check. This resulted in a more secret form of squatting which existed alongside open squatting.

Having identified the squatter camps in the city the chapter also focused on their organisation and compared them with the situation of other squatters in Johannesburg. In the following chapter the actual conditions of life of squatters around the city of Cape Town are explored.

## CHAPTER 5

### SOME ISSUES OF HEALTH AMONG THE SQUATTER COMMUNITIES IN CAPE TOWN

In order to develop a proper perspective about health issues as they affected squatter communities in Cape Town, especially during the period 1945 to 1960, one needs some sort of framework within which to base an understanding of health and situate relevant data. It is for this reason that, in this chapter, a Marxist oriented historical paradigm is used. It emphasizes prevailing conditions, namely, economic, social and political conditions as important factors defining the health of a people.<sup>(1)</sup> (Of course, the basic tenets of this paradigm are contained within historical materialism) These conditions as they affected the health of squatter communities in Cape Town, are thoroughly explored in this chapter. Besides that the various diseases which affected squatter communities most, are linked with an explanation of these conditions. In a nutshell, the trend of thought expressed in this chapter can be described as beginning with

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1. This does not imply that it is only the Marxist oriented approach to the study of health which emphasises the importance of underlying material conditions. Non-Marxists writers like B.A. Dormer and F.J. Wiles in the 1950s had started mentioning material conditions in their works as the basis of disease. See B.A. Dormer "Tuberculosis in South Africa"; British Journal of Tuberculosis, Vol. 50, 1956. Besides that, modern western medicine is beginning to acknowledge the context of health although it operates side by side with privatised capitalist medicine.

fairly broad and general perspectives and then specifying these with reference to concrete issues which affected squatter communities in Cape Town during this period of research.

Firstly, what health means can be defined or explained in various ways. But in essence health explains the total well being of a people, a community or group of people. It is unfortunate nowadays that the medical definition, the view of the 'experts', forms the basis of the social definition of health and illness throughout the world.<sup>(1)</sup> Health is sometimes defined in narrow terms and is totally isolated from economic, social and political factors. "Ill-health is now defined primarily in terms of the malfunctioning of a mechanical system, and treatment consists of surgical, chemical or even electrical intervention to restore the machine to normal working order. The defining of health and illness in a functional way is an important example of how a capitalist value system defines people primarily as producers - as forces of production".<sup>(2)</sup> The reductive and mechanistic definitions of health tend to be very individualistic in their emphasis. "It is always individuals who become sick, rather than socio-economic or environmental factors which

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1. Doyal, L. and Pennell, I. : 'The Political Economy of Health', in Oliver, C.G. (ed),: 'Poverty, Health and Health Care in South Africa' in Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, (London, Pluto Press, LTC, 1979), (Conference Paper No. 166, 1984) p.3.
  2. Ibid.

cause them to be so".<sup>(1)</sup> The emphasis on the individual origins of disease, "effectively obscures the social and economic causes of ill-health".<sup>(2)</sup> This shows that it is necessary to revisit the definition of health in the light of changing political, social and economic factors. From the perspective of historical materialism, this means that a correct definition of health should embody a correct understanding of a group's class position and implications thereof, for its total well being. Hence it is postulated that a group's relationship to the material means of life, is essential in defining its healthy existence. In his 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', Karl Marx illuminates this point perfectly when he describes the essence of man. He describes men as real and corporeal, inhaling and exhaling all the powers of nature.<sup>(3)</sup> It therefore follows that men's well being is inextricably tied up to his real material existence, (which is constituted by the combination of economic, social and political conditions). Frederick Engels,

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1. Oliver, C.G.: 'Poverty, Health and Health Care in South Africa', in the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, p.3.
2. Ibid.
3. Marx, K.: Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Translated and edited by T.B. Bottomore, (London, C.A. Watts and Co., 1963).

in the preface to the first edition of 'The origins of the Family, Private Property and the State', sums up the materialist position: "According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and the family on the other".<sup>(1)</sup> It is not the intention of this chapter to elucidate the insights of these ideas. Their value lies in that they emphasise the fact that material conditions of a people's everyday life are the most important underlying factors determining their health. They also show that the health system forms part and parcel of the totality of social and productive relations.<sup>(2)</sup> In the 1950s it seems that these

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1. Engels, F.: 'The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State', (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1884).  
(Cited in Oliver, C.G.), p.3-4.
  2. Marks, S. and Underson, N. : 'Typhus and Social Control: South Africa 1917-50' in Macleod, R. and Lewis, M: (eds) Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and Experience of European Expansion.

ideas and the insights they throw into the conceptualisation of health, were not viewed in a serious light, especially in official health circles. This is demonstrated by the prevalence of sets of stereotypes about susceptibility to disease, which we will later highlight in the course of the chapter. At this point I want to briefly follow the materialist paradigm in order to put into perspective the situation in South Africa.

In the case of South Africa, even though the social and productive relations are basically capitalist in nature, they have always been permeated and shaped in very important ways by racial factors. As a result the health system in the country, in its operation and distribution reflects this complex interaction of racial and class factors. It has always been less efficient in its operation because of its limited focus on treating individual pathological disturbances which do not coincide with any fundamental changes in the economic, social and political spheres.<sup>(1)</sup>

This occurs against the background of a less developed health sector in the country as a whole.<sup>(2)</sup> In their distribution,

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1. Annals of Internal Medicine 89: 264, 1978, (Cited in Oliver, C.G.), pp.1-20.
  2. This is indicated in an article written by Brookes, E.H., 'The Health of the Bantu' in Race Relations Journal Vol. XXI, No. 2, 1959. In the article Brookes explains how undeveloped the health sector in South Africa was in the 1950s.
  3. Savage M. 'The Political Economy of Health in South Africa' in Economics of Health Care in South Africa Vol. 1 'Perspectives on Health System', (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1979).

health care facilities also follow racial and class lines. Those who are poor, the majority of whom are Black, have few medical facilities and physicians. If in 1976, only 2.8% of doctors worked in the reserves, the situation before that, (ie in the late 1940s and 1950s) must have been worse. This shows that the distribution of human health resources in the country has always been highly skewed.

So, one can argue that during the period under discussion the basic cause of ill-health, especially within the ranks of the Black working-class in the whole South Africa, lay in economic, social and political factors. In that way capitalism and the racist political superstructure were involved. They combined to ensure that the Black working-class was more susceptible to disease and death than whites. Their working environments were particularly unhealthy and living conditions very poor. There is a distinction between industrial contamination, which affected the working-class at large and poor sanitation, inadequate housing which affected the Black working-class in particular, especially the squatters. The former has hardly been discussed for the 1950s in particular and therefore still needs to be researched. Therefore I will limit my discussion to the latter.

Squatters around the city of Cape Town were victims of this situation since they formed part of a broad working-class population in South Africa. They were among the victims of



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'social murder' which according to Engels is committed if workers have been forced by the strong arm of the law to go on living under deplorable conditions until death inevitably releases them.<sup>(1)</sup> This was exactly the case in South Africa and in Cape Town particularly. With the expansion of secondary industry in Cape Town, the living and working environments of working people were increasingly contaminated with a host of new and synthetic chemicals, plastics, toxins, pesticides, etc. whose long term influence on health are often ignored or poorly understood. In the case of squatters these toxic materials not only contaminated their working environments but their living environments also. They used the same plastics, tins, etc to build shelters. A description of a shack settlement given by the Cape Flats Commission illustrates clearly the unhealthy structure of a shack. The Commission described a squatter pondokkie as "a hovel in its design, owes nought to any school of modern architecture, European or Asiatic, ancient or modern. Its conception is determined entirely by scraps of material which go into its structure, pieces of corrugated iron, old tins and drums, rough boughs, sacking, anything which can possibly offer protection against weather. Piece by piece, scrap material is bought, begged or fetched and added

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1. Engels, F. : 'The Condition of the Working-class in 1884',

to make room for a growing family. There are no windows." (1)  
This description fitted all squatter settlements that emerged during the period 1945-1960. The appalling state of these hovels made the residents vulnerable to diseases. They were "low, dark and dirty, generally encumbered with unclean and useless rubbish, mud floors and consequently sometimes apt to be flooded in wet weather"; (2) these dwellings would only do a disservice to animals. Miss Siqhaza, a squatter in the 1950s in her description of the pondokkies says "we used to wake up at midnight and nail some parts of the shacks and rain water would be inside the house". (3) These were extremely appalling conditions especially for people who lived together with children. The Tuberculosis Commission of 1914 also stated that "overcrowding is frequent, refuse in most cases are not collected and removed, the absence of water supply is one of the most pressing needs ... altogether one could hardly imagine more suitable conditions for the spread of tuberculosis". (4) This was the reality of the settlements in which the majority of Cape Town's Black working-class population lived even during the 1940s and 1950s. Such reality ought to have motivated urgent action.

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1. UG No. 18, 1943, Cape Flats Commission, p.14.
2. Lavis, S.W. : 'Social Problems of Housing', in Social Aspects of Housing; Cape Co-ordinating Council of Welfare Organisations, 1945.  
This is also indicated in U.G. No. 34, 1914, Tuberculosis Commission, pp.125-1266.
3. Interview with Mrs Siqhaza.
4. U.G. No. 34, 1914, Tuberculosis Commission, pp.125-126.

"Yet by the 1940s the reports of various Medical Officers of health were still lamenting that Greater Cape Town had the highest death rate from tuberculosis in South Africa. The factors accountable for this were still the same. The only difference was that the situation had become worse".<sup>(1)</sup>

To explain the health conditions of the squatter communities, \* more emphasis in this chapter will be put not on their working environments but on the living environments of these people. The description given above of the conditions of squatter settlements is general and broad. That is why it is important at this point to be more specific. I will cite specific examples and explain them. These examples are Windermere, Raapkraal and Blauvlei. The former was the biggest squatter camp in Cape Town which existed during this period and the latter two represented the worst conditions of squatting in the Peninsula.

Windermere, 50 feet above sea level, about 30 years old in 1945, was taken over by the City Council only in 1943.<sup>(2)</sup> Economic circumstances forced many Coloured people to Windermere, where they could escape rates and building regulations. In later years they were joined by 'workless

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1. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.20.
  2. Cape Times, 9/03/45.

Natives' who had been hounded from the municipal area.<sup>(1)</sup> Described by a commentator of the Cape Times, as the festering sore on the outskirts of the city, Windermere with its filth and squalor was perceived to be a menace to the public health of the city.<sup>(2)</sup> Three members of parliament who were Native representatives in the House of Assembly -Mrs M. Ballinger, Mr D.B. Molteno and Mr G.K.Hemming inspected the wretched conditions of pondokkies in Windermere. They were taken round the shanty town by members of the Friends of Windermere Association. "They were taken through the notorious "stockade", where 500 people are crowded together in a huge wooden building, divided with sacking, tin and cardboard into about 60 "rooms". They were shown wood and iron shacks, some of them only a few feet high, for which the inhabitants paid as much as 1 pound 8 shillings rental. In one shack, constructed of pieces of tin held together with wire, a native woman lay on the ground with a dirty blanket over her and three dogs lying next to her. In another area, where a number of these "buildings" were scattered about a senti slope at the foot of which the wind raised clouds of dust from a vast refuse heap, there were groups of pigs, horses and cows in the path of the party. Refuse was scattered outside many of the dwellings and once off the main streets of the township walking was made difficult by the

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1. Cape Times, 25/04/45.

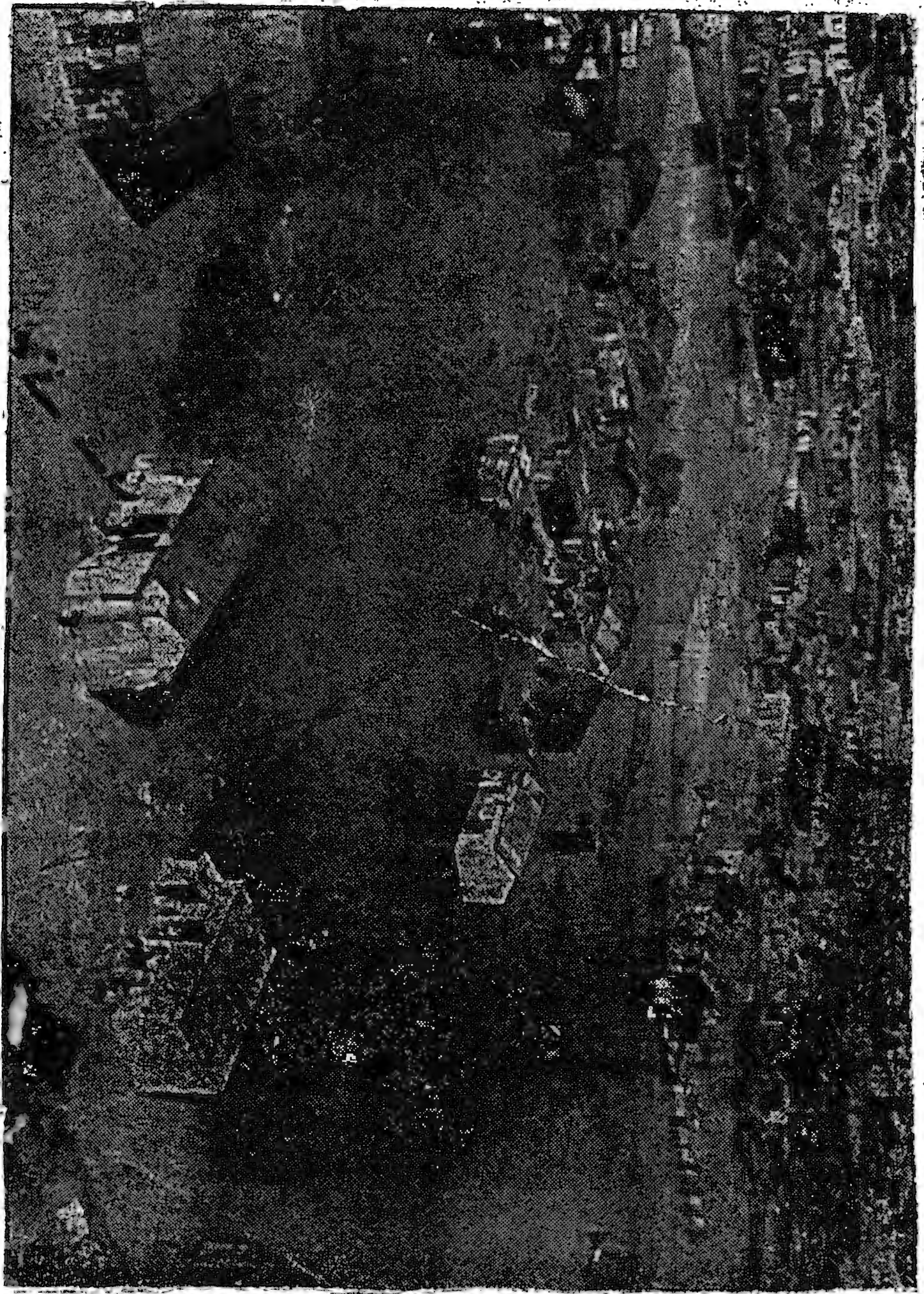
2. Ibid.

thick sand lying between the huts".<sup>(1)</sup> In addition to this Windermere had a problem of frequent flooding, especially in winter. (See the picture in the following page <sup>(2)</sup>)

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1. Cape Argus, 10/03/45.

2. The picture appeared in Cape Times 6/08/45.



The picture was taken during a weekend of flooding in Windermere. It vividly illustrates the miserable conditions in which hundreds of poor families lived, and where flooding was frequent during the winter months. The cluster of pondokkies in the centre of the picture, is almost completely surrounded by water; two of the shanties are actually isolated. At Windermere, however, there was little rise or fall in the flood levels. The whole area was virtually a lake during the winter months. Of course one should be interested to know the ultimate response of the authorities to the crisis of squatters in Windermere and in other camps. Such responses will be examined in chapter 7.

In the two other camps conditions were worse than in Windermere. One such camp was Raapkraal, situated between the Westlake Golf Course and Muizenberg Main Road. A grim picture of conditions there constituted a grave menace to the health of squatters and the wider community. At a meeting of the Cape Divisional Council to consider proposals for establishing a housing scheme for Coloureds in the area, the Medical Officer of Health of the City Council, emphasised that conditions at Raapkraal were far more appalling and that vigorous housing programmes were necessary.<sup>(1)</sup> Mr Stakol of the City Council, describing conditions in Raapkraal said "a more disgraceful state of affairs does not exist anywhere in

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1. Cape Argus, 30/12/47.

the Peninsula; Coloureds and natives are living together under pieces of iron. They are not even pondokkies - pondokkies are palaces compared to some of the places. Disease is rife, venereal disease lurks round every corner and there is tuberculosis in its most virulent forms. The stench when you walk through there is so bad that you want to stop breathing".<sup>(1)</sup> There was no water and the inhabitants were reduced to stealing water from the Westlake Golf Course.<sup>(2)</sup> The City Council had tried to exonerate itself from the blame for the conditions in Windermere by saying that the camp only fell under its control in 1943, but Raapkraal and Blauvlei had been under the control of the City Council for 25 years yet conditions there were worse than in any other squatter camp. According to Mr Sam Kahn, a member of the City Council, who addressed a Communist Party meeting in Kensington, "conditions at Blauvlei, Retreat, were worse than those at Windermere".<sup>(3)</sup> Squatters in Blauvlei inhabited miserable hovels and all the evils cited in the above-mentioned squatter camps, occurred there in a more exaggerated fashion.

Generally, squatters ~~camp~~, during this period were afflicted by the problem of overcrowding firstly because of their

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1. Cape Argus, 20/12/47.
2. Ibid.
3. Cape Times, 2/07/45.



extended family networks and secondly because of high birth rates. For example Mrs Jafta, formerly a squatter in Marabastad during the 1950s had about 10 children and they all lived together in one shack.<sup>(1)</sup> In some cases a section of the shack was rented to another person in order to reduce the outlay for rent<sup>(2)</sup> and to help a friend in need. This shows how squatters were afflicted with a problem similar to the one in towns, namely, overcrowding. The problem of overcrowding in squatter camps exacerbated a general problem of uncleanness by creating conditions in which the implications of the lack of adequate water supplies and sewage facilities were seriously felt. This created a necessary breeding ground for various diseases.

Underlying all the conditions under which squatters lived was the fact of poor wages earned at work. Rabkin, P. shows this in his socio-economic study of Parkwood Estate. Out of approximately 110 families living in Parkwood Estate that were employed, in an estimated total population of 1000 people, more than 50% earned 7/6d per week or less and only 9% earned between 15 and 1 pound 10 shillings per week.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. Interview with Mrs Jafta.
  2. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.59.
  3. Rabkin, P. : 'A Socio-economic Study of Parkwood Estate', (MSocSci Thesis, UCT, 1941), p.68. (Also cited in Budow, M.), p.61.

During the period 1945 to 1960, even though incomes had risen the value and prices of essential commodities had also risen. Economically the squatter communities remained essentially poor. After 1948 especially, there was not only a rise in food, clothes, fuel and medical expenses, but also transport costs.<sup>(1)</sup> According to Budow the Parkwood Estate used as an example above, "was an average income squatter camp",<sup>(2)</sup> something which meant that there were poorer squatter camps which existed. Another example which illustrates poverty among squatters due to poor wages is the Eureka Estate. The camp was sandy in summer and a bed of mud in the rainy season. It had no drainage, denuded of bush, the camp was barren and wind swept, cold and damp in winter, but in summer one could hardly find a cool or shady spot.<sup>(3)</sup> In this squatter camp, the income of the family was the husband's earnings and the average monthly income of most men was hardly more than three pounds. As a result some families resorted to illicit means of bringing in the money necessary to balance the family budget. The greatest expenditure incurred by the people who lived in this squatter camp was on transport. Transport costs for African squatters in this area were invariably high as the camp was situated in a peri-urban

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1. Cape Argus, 28/01/50.

2. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.62.

3. Lipschitz, M. and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatters' Camp', p.2.

area. "The workers travelled by bus to the nearby centres, Goodwood or Parow, and from there took the train to their places of employment. Those who worked in the Southern Suburbs (Observatory to Simonstown) had then to change trains at Salt River. These long and tiring journeys meant that men had to leave home early and return late; those who started work as early as 7 am. had to leave the camp before the first bus, and walk to Parow Station. This had two important effects: high transport costs and physical strain resulting in lowered efficiency and earning power."<sup>(1)</sup> Given the low incomes, the deplorable conditions of the shacks could only worsen. The low incomes deprived the squatters' ability to improve their lot. They could hardly maintain basic cleanliness or improve their diet. As a result various diseases preyed over them. The most prevalent, of which many people died were diseases like tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia, diarrhoea and enteritis.<sup>(2)</sup> These were diseases of exploitation, social diseases commoner among the ill-fed and the badly housed.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. Lipschitz, M. and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatters' Camp', p.20.

2. This is indicated in the Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, Mayor's Minutes, (Cape Town, 1945-1960).

3. Judges, S.: 'Poverty, living Conditions and Social Relations - aspects of life in Cape Town in the 1830s', (MA Thesis, UCT, 1977).

The insanitary living conditions, and the absence of pure reticulated water supplies, nourished the spread of these diseases amongst the squatter communities. To illustrate the point about the insanitary conditions in the squatter camps, one can take Eureka Estate as an example. It is said that lavatories there were very few and small, often shared by more than one family.<sup>(1)</sup> Small Coloured boys would come once or twice a week to empty the buckets which they took to the bush at a charge of 1 shilling per week.<sup>(2)</sup> Whereas the lack of water was such that squatters had either to purchase water from the owner of the estate, if a public stand pipe was available, or obtain it from sources such as pools, wells and tanks, which were usually open to various pollutants.<sup>(3)</sup>

Lipschitz and Greshoff summarize conditions at Eureka Estate in a way that typifies conditions which obtained in all squatter camps during the period under discussion. As they put it, "the unhygienic conditions of the camp increased the need for medical attention. Situated around a stagnant vlei, without sanitation or drainage, where every shack was drougthy and damp, and food and clothing inadequate, sickness and accidents were inevitable. Children cut their feet on the rusty tins and nails in the sand, and rapid infection

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1. Lipschitz, M. and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatters' Camp', p.20.

2. Ibid.

3. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', p.65.

resulted; young children playing in the small space near fire buckets frequently received severe burns which became septic".<sup>(1)</sup> These conditions affected the income and expenditure of the people who lived in them.

Typical of poverty stricken classes in general, 'Non-Europeans' in Cape Town showed higher infant mortality rates, death rates due to diseases, as compared to Europeans during this period of research. This is not surprising given the fact that the majority of them lived under conditions of squatting. More than 50% of deaths among 'Non-Europeans', due to diseases like tuberculosis, was contributed by squatters, especially those who lived in Windermere. This is illustrated in the following tables<sup>(2)</sup> (See next page)

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1. Lipschitz, M. and Greshoff, N.M. : 'Living Conditions in a Squatters' Camp', p.29.
  2. The figures have been taken from the Reports of Medical Officer of Health, in Mayor's Minutes, (Cape Town, 1945 - 1960).

INFANT MORTALITY RATES, PER 1,000 BIRTHS BY CAUSE AND RACE

(Infants from one to two years)

YEARS	tuberculosis diseases		bronchitis & pneumonia		diarrhea & enteritis	
	Eur	Non Eur	Eur	Non Eur	Eur	Non Eur
1944-45	1.6	13.6	1.1	13.6	1.4	22.1
1945-46	0.9	14.9	0.3	12.8	0.3	13.2
1946-47	-	12.0	0.9	11.6	1.2	9.4
1947-48	1.6	16.5	0.8	12.4	0.3	11.0
1948-49	0.8	15.0	0.5	8.1	0.3	17.6
1949-50	0.3	12.4	0.5	8.9	0.3	13.4
1950-51	0.9	8.1	-	7.4	1.2	14.8
1951-52	0.6	9.3	0.9	5.6	0.9	19.1
1952-53	0.6	6.3	0.6	4.7	0.6	18.3
1953-54	-	5.8	-	4.3	0.3	19.1
1954-55	-	3.5	-	4.6	-	8.2
1956	-	3.5	-	4.6	0.6	14.3
1957	-	3.2	0.9	5.9	-	11.4
1958	-	2.9	0.9	3.9	0.3	11.2
1959	-	1.3	0.6	3.8	0.8	9.0
1960	-	1.1	-	3.7	0.6	8.2

TOTAL INFANT MORTALITY RATE (All causes included)

(Infants from one to two years of age)

YEARS	EUROPEAN	NON-EUROPEAN
1944-45	6.2	60.8
1945-46	3.2	49.5
1946-47	3.0	39.5
1947-48	4.9	51.3
1948-49	2.1	47.5
1949-50	1.9	44.7
1950-51	3.0	37.5
1951-52	5.2	39.0
1952-53	3.3	35.5
1953-54	3.2	30.1
1954-55	2.1	36.7
1956	1.2	27.9
1957	3.1	28.9
1958	2.9	25.0
1959	3.1	20.9
1960	0.8	20.0

As indicated in the tables in the previous page, the 'Non-European' population suffered most from diseases like tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia, diarrhea and gastro-enteritis. There was a steady rise in the number of deaths occurring because of tuberculosis between 1945 to 1949 but after that there was a steady decline. For instance before 1945 the number of infants who died of tuberculosis rose from between 10.0 and 13.3 to 14.9 yet the numbers declined very steadily after 1949 from 15.0 in 1948-49, 12.4 in 1949-50 to 8.1 in 1950-51. In 1960 the numbers had declined to 1.1. For European infants there is absolutely no death recorded during this date. At any rate the infant mortality rates for Europeans due to tuberculosis throughout the period were very minimal ranging between 0.3 to 1.6. But after 1953 there were no infants recorded to have died of tuberculosis amongst Europeans yet for 'Non-Europeans' the situation had not changed remarkably. Even though the numbers show a steady decline, there is not even one year when no death is recorded. The steady decline in the number of deaths among 'Non-European' infants is matched by a very sharp and rapid decline in the number of European infants dying of similar causes. What this reflects are underlying differences in material conditions of Europeans and 'Non-Europeans' which in very important ways, reduced disease resistance of the latter thus making them more prone to disease and death. It is therefore small wonder that even the infant mortality rate, all causes included, reflects sharp differences in the

material wealth of the two groups. Between the years 1944-45 the infant mortality rate, all causes included was 6.2 for Europeans and 60.8 for 'Non-Europeans', 2.1 for Europeans in 1948-49 and 47.5 for 'Non-Europeans', 2.1 for Europeans in 1954-55 and 36.7 for 'Non-Europeans', 0.8 for Europeans in 1960 and 20.3 for 'Non-Europeans'. I chose the years 1944-45, 1948-49, 1954-55 and 1960 because as I indicated in chapter 2, they were on the same point of the growth cycle of South Africa's post-war economy. It therefore becomes important to read the influence this might have had on the life and death of infants in Cape Town. From the figures given in the tables above, one can notice a decline in the infant mortality rates during these years but one can hardly interpret~~ed~~ that to mean an improved economic status of 'Non-Europeans' in particular. A progressive decline of the figures in both tables was due to a number of factors. Firstly, after 1948 and especially in the 1950s due to the intensification of influx control measures, many 'Non-Europeans' were thrown into hidden forms of informal settlements. A very large number of Black people whose presence in the city was 'illegal', inhabited the bushes, wherever they were free of molestation. Needless to say that the conditions under which they lived were appalling in the extreme. Diseases which occurred under such circumstances would hardly<sup>have</sup> be known in official health circles. In other words the fact<sup>that</sup> the number of 'Non-Europeans' running away from authority increased after 1948 influenced the decline in figures showing mortality rates



among 'Non-Europeans' (ie. infants and adults. In addition to that, resettlement schemes which took place in the late 1950s, culminating in the migration of Africans and Coloureds from Windermere to Nyanga African Township and Factreton, respectively, resulted in a sharp decline in figures showing mortality rates among 'Non-Europeans' in 1959.<sup>(1)</sup>

In official records the progressive decline in figures indicating death among 'Non-European' infants is explained as an indication of success of health measures used to reduce death from diseases. Even though that cannot be rejected as completely untrue, it is nonetheless a biased view which favours the city's health department.

The actual contribution of squatters to the death rate of 'Non-Europeans' is not adequately represented in the existing health statistics. This is because of the fact that for a long time the squatter communities have not been regarded or accepted as members of the urban community. Hence the incidence of death through diseases amongst them is poorly represented in official health records. Figures that are available are only for Windermere, which was one of the oldest and largest squatter areas in the Peninsula. Even in the case of Windermere, the health statistics are only

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1. Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, in Mayor's Minutes, (Cape Town, 1959).

scrappy and not comprehensive.

Shown in the tables below are, firstly, estimations of Cape Town's population during the census years 1946, 1951, 1960. I have calculated these figures from the census records which are very detailed and sometimes difficult to follow. They are followed by tables illustrating the number of deaths classified according to cause and race in Cape Town. In other words, this demonstrates the differences in conditions of life between Europeans and 'Non-Europens', especially those who lived as squatters at the margins of the city.

POPULATION ENUMERATED IN EACH TOWN AND VILLAGE BY RACE<sup>(1)</sup>

WYNBERG  
CAPE TOWN

Year	Europeans	Asiatics	Coloureds	Natives
1946	77 921	2 450	91 749	20 473
	109 505	3 870	90 521	13 348

BELLVILLE  
CAPE TOWN

WYNBERG (1951 and 1960 Censuses)

Year	Europeans	Asiatics	Coloureds	Natives
1951	49 827	1 126	59 392	10 469
	112 281	4 220	107 365	18 233
	91 057	2 854	124 914	28 370
1960	70 002	104 252	1 209	5 861
	113 887	123 631	3 940	13 013
	105 012	181 024	3 640	52 622

1. Population Census, 7 May 1946, Vol. 1, UG 51/1949.  
Ibid, 6 September 1960, RP. No. 62/1963.

DEATHS CLASSIFIED FOR CAUSES AND RACE (per 1000 births)

YEAR : 1944-45					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	128	168	14	856	1048
Bronchitis	78	100	3	389	492
Diarrhoea	30	98	6	364	368

YEAR : 1945-46					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	136	210	6	867	1083
Bronchitis	66	97	10	332	439
Diarrhoea	32	67	2	246	315

YEAR : 1946-47					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	134	216	11	837	1064
Bronchitis	74	117	4	376	497
Diarrhoea	29	91	4	248	343

YEAR : 1947-48					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	123	212	14	963	1189
Bronchitis	66	134	7	422	563
Diarrhoea	25	97	4	294	395

YEAR : 1948-49					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	82	207	10	854	1071
Bronchitis	74	71	8	322	401
Diarrhoea	19	114	4	383	501

YEAR : 1949-50					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	106	205	10	737	952
Bronchitis	73	94	7	349	450
Diarrhoea	19	109	4	312	425

YEAR : 1950-51					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	86	176	7	693	876
Bronchitis	57	197	6	259	416
Diarrhoea	22	173	6	395	574

YEAR : 1951-52					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	49	157	5	612	774
Bronchitis	69	73	3	247	323
Diarrhoea	19	204	6	429	639

YEAR : 1952-53					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	40	127	5	457	589
Bronchitis	46	82	5	228	315
Diarrhoea	13	165	3	474	642

YEAR : 1954-55					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	32	64	3	281	348
Bronchitis	20	2	1	25	28
Diarrhoea					

YEAR : 1956					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	26	40	2	192	234
Bronchitis	68	63	2	206	271
Diarrhoea					

YEAR : 1958					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	35	55	2	178	235
Bronchitis	63	61	4	251	316
Diarrhoea					

YEAR : 1959					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	33	21	5	256	282
Bronchitis	71	36	6	209	251
Diarrhoea					

YEAR : 1960					
Disease	Europeans	Natives	Asians	Coloured	Total of Non-Europeans
T.B.	28	23	1	146	170
Bronchitis	59	29	6	250	285
Diarrhoea					

DEATHS OF RESIDENTS IN WINDERMERE (Out of an estimated total population of 30,000)

YEARS	tuberculosis diseases	bronchitis & pneumonia	diarrhea & enteritis
1943-44	136	101	85
1944-45	-	-	-
1945-46	118	-	-
1946-47	119	74	-
1947-48	133	79	87
1948-49	99	47	104
1949-50	119	51	91
1950-51	-	-	-
1951-52	-	-	-
1952-53	-	-	-
1953-54	-	-	-
1954-55	46	48	-
1956	-	-	-
1957	-	-	-
1958	-	-	-
1959	-	-	-
1960	-	-	-

1. All the tables indicating deaths classified for causes and race from 1945 to 1960 have been calculated from the Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, in Mayor's Minutes, Cape Town. Some of the years like 1953-54, 1957 have no statistics recorded. Besides that as from 1953 to 1960 no deaths caused by diarrhoea and enteritis have been recorded. This shows that existing official health statistics are incomprehensive.

The table which shows deaths in Windermere also has a number of unrecorded deaths caused by tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia, especially after 1955.

During the years 1945-46, of the total number of deaths among the 'natives' due to tuberculosis the squatters contributed 56.1%, in 1949 it was 58% and in 1955 it was 71.8%.

Tuberculosis is a good example of a disease caused among other things by poverty with its consequences in privation, overcrowding and filth. The living conditions of squatters in Windermere embodied all these factors. The wretched state of the area enhanced the virulence of tuberculosis and other diseases like bronchitis-pneumonia, and diarrhoea-enteritis.

Oral evidence also reveals that diseases related to cold and fever were even more common amongst children in squatter camps, especially those children whose parents were 'illegals' in the city. As Mrs Qhaza who was an 'illegal' squatter at Masakeni camp in 1954, puts it, "we used to be chased by the police, by five o'clock in the morning you had to be out of the shack to hide in the bush because the police would come to take us. We would come back late when we suspect that offices are closed. We would stay with our children in the bushes".<sup>(1)</sup> As a result of this children were susceptible to all kinds of fever, especially in winter when it was rainy and cold.

As indicated in the tables showing infant mortality rates, the number of deaths due to diseases tends to decline over

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1. Interview with Mrs Sighaza.

the period 1945 to 1960. The explanation already given above also fits here. It was the intensification of influx control measures and the resettlement of squatters which influenced the decline in figures rather than actual improvements in economic or living conditions.

All in all this chapter has demonstrated that in order to understand the issues of health among the squatter communities in Cape Town, one needs a theory of health which emphasises prevailing material conditions at a given time, that is social, political and economic conditions as a necessary frame of reference. In line with this view, the chapter has elaborated the material conditions of squatters during the period 1945 to 1960, by moving from general and broad to more specific cases. It described the conditions of life in squatter communities of Windermere, Raapkraal and Blauvlei. The origin and spread of disease is linked in this chapter to these conditions. This contradicts and exposes the official stereotype which still prevailed during the period 1945 to 1960, blaming the "personal habits of the native"<sup>(1)</sup> for the origins and prevalence of disease. For tuberculosis disease, for instance, the following "habits of the native" were cited as the main reasons for its prevalence and origins: (i) "His habit of promiscuous spitting, especially on the floor and walls of his hut, (ii) his love for dark

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1. UG. 34, 1914, Report of the Tuberculosis Commission.



ill-ventilated huts, and his objection to fresh air at night time".<sup>(1)</sup> Whereas other sets of stereotypes which existed during this period attributed the susceptibility of Blacks to tuberculosis, to their "inexperience with civilised life and their unsuccessful adaptation to the ways of industrial society".<sup>(2)</sup> Others attributed Blacks' susceptibility to tuberculosis to the fact that because of little contact with the disease, Blacks had not yet developed an immunity to it. Packard shows that most of these stereotypes originated before the 1940s and continued to exist even during the 1950s against the challenge of new theories which stressed environmental factors, primarily overcrowded housing and malnutrition.<sup>(3)</sup> The continuing existence of these stereotypes nourished some of the segregationist legislation which were later stipulated by the government especially after 1948. In this chapter health statistics have also been used to demonstrate death through disease between the various 'racial' groups. It also attempts to identify the contribution of squatters especially those in Windermere to the total number of deaths amongst Black people in Cape Town.

The chapter therefore concludes that health among the

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1. UG. 34, 1914, Report of the Tuberculosis Commission.

2. Packard, R.M. : White Plague, Black Labour,

(Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1989),

p.188.

3. Ibid.

squatter communities in the city of Cape Town, remains a magnifying glass through which the entire spectrum of the social reality of injustice or selfish inhumanity of those who possess power and wealth can be exposed. Examining issues of health among squatters in Cape Town exposes fully the tragedy of their position. In spite of that squatters around Cape Town during this period, through the culture which they developed, expressed their acceptance of the sorrow and joy inherent in the human condition and affirmed that life in itself was valuable. This is elaborated in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### ASPECTS OF CULTURE AMONG THE SQUATTERS IN CAPE TOWN, 1945-60

Culture is one concept which is very difficult to pin down or contain in any single definition. In fact attempts to define culture can only represent arbitrary delimitations of a completely fluid concept. That is why it is sometimes difficult to understand what it exactly means to examine the culture of a society, community or group of people. Therefore it is important that one should always set oneself parameters or cut off points when using this concept, for the sake of clarity. According to Thornton, "the concept culture was from the beginning controversial and often confused" hence its definition suffices all purposes.<sup>(1)</sup> Attempts to define culture vary between idealist emphasis in which "culture is seen as a process and a state of cultivation that should be a universal idea" and the emphasis on particular 'cultures' which stresses the differences in the ways in which people find meaning and value in their lives and indeed conceive of

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1. Thornton, R. : "Culture : a contemporary definition", in E. Boonzaier and D.J. Sharp (eds.), South African Keywords: the uses and abuses of political concepts (Cape Town, David Philip Publishers, 1988), p.273.

perfection.<sup>(1)</sup> "Standing uneasily between these emphases is what is still probably the most common popular meaning of the word 'culture', namely, a body of actual artistic and intellectual work."<sup>(2)</sup>

Very recently, some of the working definitions of culture that seem to be very appealing are that "'culture' comprises firstly the values, feelings, symbols, beliefs, mores and customs that give a subjective meaning to the material conditions in which a social group lives. Secondly, it refers to the social practices, the institutional and informal human activities that produce those patterns of meaning. The 'maps of meaning' that are the product of cultural practices do not only exist subjectively, but acquire an objective existence as a 'totality of determined notions and concepts' that are lived by people as an integral part of their daily lives".<sup>(3)</sup>

Nevertheless the debate as to the exact meaning of culture is still an ongoing process. In the light of the above explanations, what one can deduce is that when the concept

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1. Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol. 2, (US., Macmillan Co. and Free Press, US., 1967), p.274.
2. Ibid.
3. Koch, E. : 'Ideology and Class Structure - A Review and Critique of the Work of E.P. Thompson and L. Althusser' - unpublished seminar paper (1981). (Cited in Bradford, H., and Nasson, B. (eds.), South African Research Papers, (Cape Town, Department of Economic History, UCT, 1988), p.9.

'culture' is used, it usually infers the making of meaning and is largely concerned with the intellectual products, practices and inter-connections of a social formation, a community or group of people. It is largely in this sense that the concept 'culture' is used in this chapter. It is used to identify the interconnections that made the squatter communities around the City of Cape Town and to demonstrate that squatters asserted their lives as dignified and invaluable beyond the limits set by their conditions of life. Beyond the tragedy of their position they projected a vision of hope. This is illustrated by reference to the role of churches, stokvel parties and even shebeens, as social centres which offered devotees a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded people. It is unfortunate that the existing literature on squatting in Cape Town has almost ignored the cultural aspect of the life of squatters. Yet it is an examination of this aspect which captures us something of the essence of their lives. Even Budow in her pioneering work fails to reveal that in spite of the miseries in which squatters lived, their lives in the shacks had moments of joy and humour which in various ways enabled the residents to rise above the daily grind and recuperate. Andrew Silk in his story of Modderdam, only touches issues of culture very superficially. Only Swart's work on Windermere examines the cultural aspects of the Windermere community in a more thorough and in depth fashion. For uncovering some of the cultural issues, there is often few other sources which can

yield valuable information as can be gained through oral information. "Voices which cannot be found in records of the City Council or City newspapers, are very clearly heard in confident tone in the transcripts of oral memories".<sup>(1)</sup> Because of limited written sources on culture among the squatters in Cape Town, this chapter draws heavily from oral information.

The culture of squatter communities around Greater Cape Town during this period of research was representative of a community in transition from the country to the city. It exhibited an interesting blend of a working-class town and an African village.<sup>(2)</sup> The ordinary and everyday experiences of squatters, the organisation of life and activities in the shacks confirm this point. Mr Maya, for instance, a former squatter in Goodwood Acres <sup>from</sup> ~~in~~ 1945 to 1950, still recalls that even though they were in the city, they lived as if they were in a rural African village. He says "it was just like in the country-side because what we used to do on Sundays was to visit friends and enjoy ourselves by drinking Xhosa beer. We

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1. Jeppie, S.: 'Aspects of Popular Culture and Class Expression in Inner Cape Town', p.4.
2. Silk, A. : A Shanty Town in South Africa; the story of Modderdam, p.9.

would visit each other just like in the country side."<sup>(1)</sup>

Clan names were used quite often, as a polite greeting and a way of keeping the children knowing very well which of their friends and contemporaries fell within the prohibited degrees of marriage and which did not. (Of course, it cannot be assumed that this was also the case among the Coloured squatter population.) The authority of elders, the public meeting of residents and kinship ties all formed the cornerstones of the organisation of life in squatter camps. People depended on the authority of elderly men, the fathers of the camps, for guidance and public meetings of residents were courts where internal conflicts were settled and fines levied. This was done in a very traditional way. The kind of fines levied revealed this as well; for instance the usual fines levied for any individual or group which had caused trouble in the camp was to prepare Xhosa beer for everyone to come and drink. Drinking would be accompanied by words of warning to the trouble maker.<sup>(2)</sup> It was in the habit of most predominantly African squatter camps to settle their internal disputes on their own and in this manner. When it was felt that the case was beyond the residents' ability to solve or when the offence was done repeatedly by the same person or group, the case was submitted to the authorities outside the camp. The persistence of extended kinship relationships

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1. Interview with Mr Maya, Khikhi workers' hostel, Gugulethu.

2. Ibid.

featured prominently in the family life of squatters.<sup>(1)</sup> Not only were most squatter families responsible for their families in the country side (usually the husband's family) but also shared their food with relatives staying with them on a short visit whereas squatter women in some cases shared meals with a widowed neighbour.<sup>(2)</sup> As Mrs Zinto puts it "A person would come to you when she has run out of food and you would share with her".<sup>(3)</sup> In a case where a member of the community was taken into custody by the police either for having no pass or for illicit trade activity, the shack community would collect money to bail him/her out. If the person had a business eg a shebeen which was destroyed during a police raid, friends and patrons would collect money to help him start his business. All these points show that certain elements of traditional African communalism were preserved in an urban environment. In spite of the village character of the life of these communities, a number of activities performed actually indicate transition from country to the city. To elaborate these, we will first look into the activities of the Christian churches, stokvel parties and shebeens.

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1. Lipschitz, M. and Greschoff demonstrate this very clearly in their study of the Eureka Estate. See 'Living Conditions in a Squatter Camp', pp.1-38.
2. Ibid.
3. Interview with Mrs Zinto.



In the life of African societies generally, even before colonial conquest, religion occupied a very central position. It was embedded in the way of life and played an important social regulatory role in the life of these communities. It is therefore small wonder that religion, represented mainly by the Christian churches, was important in the life of squatter communities around the city of Cape Town during this period of research. Through religion squatters asserted the value and dignity in their lives.

After World War II squatter camps were increasingly sites of religious diversity. In fact this represented religious differences which were in existence throughout Black South Africa during this period; differences between those who worshipped and believed in ancestors, visited medicine men; those who belonged to the Christian African Independent churches and those who belonged to missionary churches viz., Anglicans, Protestants or Catholics.<sup>(1)</sup> The length of the period a person had spent in the city or his level of education influenced his position in this religious diversity.

There was an increase in the number of African Independent churches during this period which can be linked with an increase in the number of the Black working-class population around the city of Cape Town. African Independent churches in

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1. Silk, A.: A Shanty Town in South Africa, pp.12-13.

particular represented attempts by "the poorest of the poor" and the illiterate elements of the African working population squatting around the city, to gain some control over the process of cultural change experienced by the African people.<sup>(1)</sup> To mention a few of the independent churches which existed in abundance in squatter areas, one should cite as examples the Zionist churches and the Apostolic churches.<sup>(2)</sup> These churches performed rituals of healing and purification which attracted a number of people who swelled their ranks. For instance Mrs Qhaza, also a squatter in the 1950s was formerly a member of the Methodist church but later 'converted' to 'Zionism' after a healing experience which she got from members of the Zionist and Full Gospel churches who lived with her at Masakeni squatter camp next to Nyanga African Township.

Even though there were many of these independent churches among the squatters, there was also a large number of mission

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1. Ngubane, J.B. : "Theological Roots of African Independent and their challenge to Black Theology", in I.J. Mosala and B. Tlhagale (eds.), The Unquestionable Right to be Free; essays in Black theology, (Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1986), p.87.
  2. Mrs Zinto, Mrs Jafta, Mrs Qhaza, Mr Ntsundu and a number of my informants confirmed that there were many Zionist and Apostolic churches in the squatter camps and they themselves were also members.

churches viz., Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches. There are indications that the mission churches were numerically superior to the independent churches and there are a number of reasons for that. The most important of these reasons as Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje argue, was that the migration of Africans to Cape Town was selective.<sup>(1)</sup> Most Africans who came to Cape Town had had some schooling in the reserves and had already worked either in the Johannesburg mines. Because of their experience of both mission education and previous exposure to town life, they were more inclined to support mission churches than indigenous churches. In that way the base of potential supporters of independent churches was narrowed in the Cape Peninsula as a whole. Hence the number of independent churches in the Western Cape region was smaller when compared to Natal and Transvaal. There is hardly any indication of the fact that mission churches took as an advantage their numerical superiority over other religious sects. Instead, the separation between mission churches and independent churches, as well as other religious differences, were seldom sharply defined amongst the squatters.<sup>(2)</sup> This is demonstrated by the fact that there was cooperation between different religious groups. In cases of death or funerals the churches cooperated to bring consolation and encouragement to

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1. Wilson, M and Mafeje, A.: Langa: a study of social groups

in an African Township, (London, OUP, 1963), pp.13-44.

2. Silk, A.: A Shanty Town in South Africa, p.13.

the bereaved. They cooperated in arranging donations and transport if the dead person was to be buried in the reserves.<sup>(1)</sup> What all this shows is that the role of churches was very important in enhancing the existence of squatters as communities at the margins of the city. They offered a people, uprooted and abandoned by forces of apartheid and capitalism, some kind of community to replace older community patterns which were being displaced. The mission churches in particular were channels of assimilation into a new urban culture dominated by Western values. They were not only leading in the establishment of schools but also encouraged forms of behaviour and norms based on Western values. This is clearly shown by the language of most Christian converts. Certain terms were to be avoided by Christians for they were designated ungodly or unChristian. In fact this is part of the general influence of Christian religion amongst the indigenous people in South Africa. The Black separatist churches on the other hand through rituals and dance sought to preserve some elements of African traditional society. The co-existence of all these religious sects, made an interesting blend which characterised the religious aspect of the culture of squatters.

To many individuals and groups living in squatter camps, church membership served an important recreational and

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1. Interview with Mrs Sig'haza, Site B, Khayelitsha.

social function. Membership in the church involved, in addition to the attendance of church services, attendance of meetings, outings, etc.<sup>(1)</sup> A majority of women in squatter camps attended churches because there were few alternative public meeeting places for them. The main choices for them were between involvement in the church and the social life based entirely on family and neighbourhood.<sup>(2)</sup>

Besides the churches other cultural activities which were part of the cultural life of most squatter camps were stokvel parties and shebeens. In the case of stokvel parties, the custom was for a group of households to take it in turns to provide beer or other drinks, guests paying an entrance fee and sometimes buying foodstuffs at the party.<sup>(3)</sup> Parties which included men were usually held over the weekends.<sup>(4)</sup> The money raised from these parties was used to balance the budget of the various families involved. These stokvel parties were a very popular form of enjoyment, particularly among the migrants, the 'new comers' of the shacks and the illiterates. As a result, over the weekends especially, the

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1. Lipschitz, M. and Greschoff demonstrate this very clearly in their study of the Eureka Estate. See 'Living Conditions in a Squatter Camp', pp.1-38.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid

4. Ibid.

shack population often doubled, as workers from hostels and barracks throughout the city flocked into the squatter camps to attend the stokvel parties which were commonly designated as 'Mabhokwe'. My informants cannot forget how squatters in those days used to enjoy 'Mabhokwe'. According to Mrs Sighaza, 'Mabhokwe' was the name coined by the migrants to describe the dance performed in the stokvel parties during that time. This dance combined essential elements of African traditional style performance with the Western urban style. In other words the way the dance was performed involved the mixing together of African and Western styles. The songs played had a more African traditional rhythm but the accompaniment was that of an organ or piano and milk tin-rattles which were an improvisation.<sup>(1)</sup> People enjoyed these performances which were essentially week-end activities. Some would forget their families in the reserves and even regret the time they wasted with them in the reserves before they could discover the 'niceties' of life in the camps. As Mrs Sighaza puts it, "it was easy to find a man crying, "yho", only to find that no one is beating him, he is just happy. Men would dance until the sweat runs down the beard".<sup>(2)</sup> It is said by my informants that the performances were so interesting to the extent that even the policemen on duty to patrol squatter camps would find themselves

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1. Interview with Mrs Sighaza.

2. Ibid.

entertained. There was an incident at a stokvel party when two white policemen arrived during the late hours of the night to disperse the people and search for passes. It is said that all people shouted at them "sheep's head" (which is a derogatory phrase in Xhosa), and they advanced dancing and chanting towards the police who stood almost frightened and astonished.<sup>(1)</sup> Reaction and chaos which followed the arrival of the two policemen can be read to imply a few important factors. Even though there is no clear political intention which can be isolated, one can discern an expression of deep-seated resentment against agents of the state. This however makes one interested to know something about the political character of the consciousness of squatters around Cape Town during this period. From whatever bits and pieces of evidence can be pieced together, with oral information included, there is hardly any indication as to whether squatters were able to develop any coherent political position either in an organisational form, to express their political consciousness or establish broadly based linkages with various mass movements. While the African National Congress Youth League tried to sustain contact with the city's Black working population during this period, there is however hardly any indication as to whether they ever tried to determine the nature and pace of struggles which affected the squatters in particular. It was only in the late 1950s that the ANC

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1. Interview with Mrs Sig'haza.

identified clearly with squatter communities which were being raided by the police in an attempt to clear 'illegals' out of squatter camps.<sup>(1)</sup> According to some of the interviews it was only after 1960 that people who lived in the shacks were brought into the mainline of national politics. Of course this does not mean that all the squatters before this date were politically passive. What it means is that through the 'Pogo movement',<sup>(2)</sup> the majority of squatters were drawn into mass political participation. Mrs Jafta confirms this as she says "I only came to be aware of what is happening in politics in 1960 when I was staying in Nyanga and there was fighting that time".<sup>(3)</sup>

In summary the stokvel parties, especially 'Mabhokwe', served an important role in bridging the gap between the rural and urban, traditional and modern forms of enjoyment as it combined elements of both. Apart from the stokvel parties the range of activities in the squatter camps was more diverse than one could expect. It included the selling of dagga, passes, herbs, hand made jerseys, second hand clothes, fruit, vegetables, uncooked and cooked meat, and a string of shebeens. But the stokvel parties were the most important

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1. New Age, 27/01/1955.

2. Lodge, T.: Insurrection in South Africa: the Pan African African Congress and the Pogo Movement, 1959-1965, (York, York University Press, 1984).

3. Interview with Mrs Jafta.



venue for the redistribution of money.

What is remarkable about most squatter camps in this period, was the absence of cultural institutions which characterise a stable or a settled community. These are institutions like the schools, church buildings (church services were conducted in shacks), playgrounds, etc. Absence of schools implied the lack of schooling for the majority of children in these areas and limited job opportunities for them. It was only in the Eureka Estate that a school building, the plank and tin shed built by parents as a school house, existed.<sup>(1)</sup> In order that it could become officially recognised and qualify for a state subsidy, its management was <sup>over</sup> taken by the Institute of Race Relations in the 1950s.

Windermere was another exception for a number of reasons. Being the largest squatter camp, it was no longer a peripheral area as Cape Town expanded. Windermere was fairly close to the city centre, the garden suburb of Pinelands, and the expanding Northern suburbs. It attracted therefore the attention of the wider public and the activities performed by the welfare organisations actually gave birth to a number of cultural institutions not found in other camps. There were a number of schools in Windermere,

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1. See Lipschitz, M. and Greschoff, 'Living Conditions in a Squatter Camp', pp.1-38.

most of them attached to mission churches. The first one of these was the Moravian School which was begun in circa 1910 by M.R.D. Erasmus".<sup>(1)</sup> St. Johns Primary School was begun circa 1923 by Luke O'Reilly of the Catholic Church in Coronation Road, and later, the Holy Cross Sisters took over the running of the school. Whereas Mr Van Roy of the African Methodist Episcopal Church opened another school which catered predominantly for Africans.<sup>(2)</sup> Other church schools which opened during the 1930s were the Anglican-run Good Shepherd School, the Methodist Primary School, and the school run by the City mission.<sup>(3)</sup> The first state - run school to be opened in the area was Kensington Central School in 1935, which was followed in 1945 by the opening of Windermere Primary School.

All these schools operated under appalling conditions. The buildings were part-iron, part-brick construction, "resembling a shanty town in which homeless people slept at night, and into which livestock, including cows, wandered"<sup>(1)</sup> In 1952 the first secondary school in Windermere was opened ie. Kensington High School. "While providing a very important

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1. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: From Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.43.

2. Ibid., pp.43-45.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.46.

service, the limited resources of the schools however, and the conditions under which they operated, meant that the quality of formal education was not very high"<sup>(2)</sup> Obviously, the fact that there were many church schools in Windermere indicates that there were many churches in the area. Besides providing schooling, the churches through the activities of youth clubs, mission work and poverty relief activities contributed towards building the life and culture of the community of Windermere. Otherwise the other cultural activities we have already discussed also prevailed in Windermere. Like in other squatter camps there were large numbers of shebeens, stokvel parties, etc around which the social life of many people centred.<sup>(3)</sup>

On the whole the aspects of culture among the squatter communities we have examined in this chapter, reveal a more marginal and unstable character. It appears that the culture of squatters in Cape Town during this period was largely characterised by an interesting blend of rural and urban values. Whilst their culture preserved parts of the norms of traditional society, it also assimilated bits and pieces of

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1. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere : From Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.47.

2. Ibid, p.49.

urban and township culture.<sup>(1)</sup> It does clearly show a progressive assimilation into urban culture particularly in those old squatter camps like Windermere.

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1. A number of African and Western scholars in various ways do make some of these points. I can mention as an example Meyer, P., 'The Origins and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies' in Black Villagers in an Industrial Society, (London, OUP, 1980).  
Vilakazi, A. : Zulu Transformations, (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1965).  
Hellmann, E. : 'Rooiyard: a sociological survey of an urban Native Slumyard', Rhodes - Livingstone Papers, No.13, (O.U.P., 1948).

CHAPTER 7

RESPONSES OF THE AUTHORITIES AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY TO THE  
PLIGHT OF SQUATTERS

Reactions to the plight of squatters during the period 1945 to 1960 were very wide and diverse. In this chapter we can hardly comprehend all the dimensions involved. Only the major aspects will be highlighted. The main focus will be on the activities of the local authorities of Cape Town, the Central Government and welfare organisations.

The responses by those in authority exhibited conflicts between local administration, Provincial Administration and the Central Government, whereas on the part of the wider community the contradiction was between individuals or groups who sought to alleviate the plight of squatters and those who sought to exploit the situation in which the squatters found themselves.<sup>(1)</sup> Budow in her thesis elaborates this very clearly. As she puts it, "for every individual who sought to alleviate the plight of squatters, there was a corresponding individual or group who exploited the situation in which most squatters found themselves, and added to their burden."<sup>(2)</sup>

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1. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town'.

2. Ibid., p.75.

She mentions as an example of such groups, those involved in the hire purchase sale of land to squatters.<sup>(1)</sup> "Selling land at excessive total prices, a contract of sale under suspensive conditions was made attractive to squatters by low down payments and small monthly instalments. In addition to the huge profits made on the high total purchase price, the inclusion of a 'forfeiture clause' in many of the sales contracts ensured greater profits and further exploitation".<sup>(2)</sup> This arrangement was superficially attractive but ultimately exploitative to many squatters. According to Budow, even those to whom land was rented out by private land owners also faced a similar fate, ie. ultimate exploitation.<sup>(3)</sup> "For many land owners, renting out their land to squatters became more profitable and certainly less effort, than, for example, farming".<sup>(4)</sup> Renting out land, even unproductive land (in areas of sand and wattle), at high rates was one of the means through which the little money a destitute people had acquired was taken back by the capitalists.

Contrary to this trend, a number of individuals and groups responded with genuinely good intentions to alleviate the

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1. Budow, M. : "Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town, 1939

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p.77.

plight of squatters. But what is interesting to notice is that both kinds of responses examined in this chapter, emanated from the white community. Yet it was the white community's position of privilege which in the final analysis best explained the plight of squatters. Thus this takes us directly to the core of the inherent limitations of the activities of welfare organisations which during this period responded positively to the plight of squatters. Their activities were not designed to change the situation in which squatters found themselves, but were only intended to equip squatters with means of coping with their misery. This was precisely because the plight of squatters in the city was not only a result of a housing problem in Cape Town but related more intricately with deep seated national political and economic questions.

Perhaps, it may serve us a good starting point to explain what motivated the responses of the authorities, welfare organisations and individuals in the community of Cape Town to respond to the plight of squatters, before examining their actual activities.

Very briefly, on the part of local authorities, response to the plight of squatters was triggered by a number of factors. One can mention the desire to keep authority free of blame and to win the confidence of those with genuine humanitarian concerns. Secondly, the City Council also acted under

pressure from certain elements of the city's wider community who feared the outbreak of another plague in Cape Town due to deteriorating conditions in squatter camps. Whereas the responses of welfare organisations ranged from those of self interest, genuine social concern to purely liberal paternal concerns. All this is deduced from the actual activities performed by these organisations in the squatter camps around the city. We will examine first the activities of local authorities and the main focus will be on what they decided upon as the main solution to save the situation of squatters.

The local authorities perceived of the solution to the plight of squatters in three ways; (i) provision of subsidised housing for the poorer classes of the community, on a broad and more general scale, (ii) improving the conditions in which Africans lived in approved squatter sites and (iii) tightening influx control regulations. The latter point has been explained in the previous chapters as one of the contributory factors to the growth of squatting in Cape Town. At this point the focus will be on the item about provision of housing for the poorer classes of the community of Cape Town. We will assess the extent to which the local authorities and the government succeeded in this regard. To understand their position, one needs to recap on what happened before this period of research. The theses by Budow and Swart cover most of this area and are therefore important sources of reference.



During the late 1920s and 1930s, the local authorities and the government had followed a restrictive or controlling approach towards urban reproduction of African people, nationally. This is made clear by the fact that very little was done for homeless Africans in the 1930s, a decade when resources were made available for the provision of African and Coloured housing. Despite the availability of government loans to the municipalities at sub-economic rate, for the construction of dwellings which could be let to indigent people, the local authorities undermined the plight of the homeless.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1936, for instance, the government had reduced the interest rate from 2% to 3/4% on the condition that the local authority bore at least 1/2 of the loss sustained by the government. Africans were included in the provisions of the scheme in 1934.<sup>(2)</sup> But in 1939 the local authority had only succeeded in building approximately 1756 houses as public housing scheme for 'Coloureds'<sup>(3)</sup> and the provision of housing for Africans in locations had similarly proceeded at a remarkably slow pace. The location in Langa had not been extended and as a result Africans could not adequately be accommodated. By 1945, a majority of Africans

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1. Budow, M. : 'Urban Squatting in Greater Cape Town', pp.78-88

2. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', pp.54-71.

3. Ibid.

still lived outside the location in slum conditions and squatter camps. This shows how the local authorities underestimated the housing shortage and created a backlog for themselves which hampered all their efforts during the later years.

• To exonerate themselves the local authority had used, as a prime explanation and grievance the issue of finance. But while pleading financial inability the City Council was able to provide a variety of amenities for the white suburbs. This self-contradicting attitude persisted as a feature of the reactions of local authorities to the plight of squatters even during the period of this research. • Whatever housing programs were implemented during this period, came too late and were too half hearted. As a result the housing situation in Cape Town by 1948 had become disastrous. The increase and development of squatters and slum areas had assumed tremendous proportions. But the significance of the period starting from 1945 lies in the fact that, the living conditions of people in squatter camps and slums increasingly became a focus of public attention as it was repeatedly expressed in the letter pages and editorial comments in the Cape Times and Argus. Public pressure on the City Council to act also increased as a result of this. The City Council therefore recognised ultimately as a prime and essential factor the provision of housing and improvement of conditions

in squatter camps.<sup>(1)</sup>

The City Council thereafter planned a number of housing schemes and turned to the central government for finances. Because the problem of native influx and peri-urban squatting had assumed tremendous heights nationally during this period, the government was compelled to respond in a positive way to the requests of local authorities (including that of Cape Town), and assume greater responsibility for local housing. The government then, proposed to share losses with local authorities at a rate of 2 : 1 in favour of local authorities.<sup>(2)</sup> In that way, the machinery of finance in African housing was made available to the Cape Town City Council. But, as Swart puts it, there were still a few problems which remained on the way towards the solution of the housing problem viz the then existing building practices and prices remained unchanged.<sup>(3)</sup> "The government responded with the Housing (Emergency Powers) Act of 1945 which limited the profit made on national housing schemes to a maximum of 6%; empowered the government to appropriate land; limited the profits made on such land; and allow the government to force the owners of suitable buildings to accommodate a certain

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1. City of Cape Town, Mayor's Minutes, 1965.

2. Cape Times, 26/06/1944.

3. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: From Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)'.

type of tenant".<sup>(1)</sup> Despite these moves by the government, very little had been achieved by 1948. "Any further construction of African housing was delayed by the deadlock reached between the National Housing and Planning Commission and the City Council over the cost of such housing."<sup>(2)</sup> From the perspective of the NHPC, the cost of each dwelling, including services, needed to be limited to 700 pounds.<sup>(3)</sup> The City Council feared that slum conditions might result out of this arrangement. The disagreement between these two bodies created an impasse, as a result of which even the limited plans drawn out by the City Council could not be realised. For instance, in 1944, the City Council had requested from the central government financial aid to develop housing schemes in Langa and Retreat as advocated by the Cauldwell Report in 1941 and endorsed by the Inspector of Native Locations in 1943.<sup>(4)</sup> The Langa scheme was to accommodate 5000 bachelors and 700 families.<sup>(5)</sup> The NHPC, considering the cost the scheme involved, rejected the City

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1. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.57

2. Ibid, p.58.

3. Ibid.

4. Cape Times, 25/01/1944.

Annual Report of the Town Clerk, (1944), Cape Town, p.31.

5. Cape Times, 19/01/1944.

Council's application for financial aid. "Only the first two contracts of the scheme, ie, 8 blocks which accommodated 1328 men, with two men to a room rented out at 1 pound per person per week".<sup>(1)</sup> Whereas another scheme developed by the City Council along the lines suggested in the City Engineer's Report, to provide five roomed houses at a cost of 778 pounds, four roomed houses at a cost of 637 pounds and three roomed houses at a cost of 490 pounds, built from brick and without any social amenities, was approved by the NHPC but was rejected by the government.<sup>(2)</sup> The Retreat Township scheme planned to provide 500 houses and quarters for 1000 men, was approved on 5 June 1945 only to be abandoned in 1946 due to the protest by the residents of Retreat.<sup>(3)</sup> So, until 1948 nothing remarkable was actually done by the local authorities to improve the housing situation in Cape Town, except for a number of articles which plagued the city newspapers about the Council's intentions or plans to act. According to a report submitted by Mr Lunn to show what the City Council was doing and proposed to do, the number of houses under construction in 1945 totalled 798 and the Council proposed to have under construction by June 1946, a

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1. City of Cape Town : Mayor's Minutes, 1946. (Information supplied by Swart, C.C.), p.57.
2. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.57
3. Cape Argus, June 1946.

total of 2427 dwellings plus 24 blocks of bachelor quarters for 'natives'. "The dwellings would be made up as follows : houses for ex-service men, 96; for non-Europeans, 1653; for natives, 678. The 24 blocks of bachelor quarters would house 3960 natives".<sup>(1)</sup> Considering the number of people living in slum conditions, the number of people moving into the city, and the more than 30 000 people still living in squatter camps around the city, all these activities were merely a drop in the ocean. But before we proceed and examine the change which took place after 1948, it would be interesting to identify some of the activities by local authorities to alleviate conditions within squatter camps. If the local authorities failed to provide houses for squatters one would expect them to have made remarkable improvements in the conditions of life inside squatter camps. But unfortunately, even in this area, the actions of the City Council were too half hearted and slow. This is clearly illustrated in the summary of work done by the City Council in Windermere. Since May 1943 when the City Council took over Windermere from the Cape Divisional Council improvements made included the following (i) matters of public health :- According to the City Council Report which appeared in Cape Times in 1945, it was stated that there was a clinic in Windermere taken over from the Divisional Council.<sup>(2)</sup> It was found too small to accommodate all patients who attended. The City Council

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1. Cape Times, 23/06/1945.

2. Ibid.

increased the staff and provided a full service. A waiting room of ample dimensions was provided. The report proceeds and states that "there are on average about 450 attendances a week at the eight weekly medical sessions. The health work outside the clinic is done by four full-time health visitors, whose work is augmented by four part-time health visitors. During the school days the school children and other children are fed by the City Council. Two full-time health inspectors and one part-time inspector are devoted to Windermere".<sup>(1)</sup>

Besides these improvements, the Report of the City Council also boasted of "gravel road belts which had been constructed in 9th and 11th Avenue Windermere. A tar macadem belt constructed in 8th Avenue, stormwater drainage extended to 10th Avenue, including 2,500 feet of underground piping, were also in the list of improvements claimed by the City Council. In these activities the City Council spent about 56 000 pounds. According to Mr Kahn, a member of the City Council, this was "a mere drop in what in winter was a vast ocean."<sup>(2)</sup> The stormwater drainage for instance, was started when the rains came and damage had already been done. Besides that the number of health inspectors allocated at Windermere was not proportional to the needs and size of the community. Two full-time health inspectors and one part-time health

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1. Cape Times, 29/03/1945.

2. Cape Times, 02/07/1945.

inspector could not adequately serve an historically impoverished community like that of Windermere. To show that the City Council had only bluffed the people of Windermere and no significant improvements had been made, in 1946 there were still complaints about pools of stagnant water "deep enough to swim in" in some streets in Windermere and Kensington.<sup>(1)</sup> The argument<sup>e</sup> of the City Council was that Windermere could not be helped whole heartedly because the area contributed nothing to municipal revenue. Definitely this does not consider the impoverished conditions of the residents of this area. All in all what stands out clearly is that there was still more which needed to be done not only in Windermere but also in other squatter camps.

Instead the local authorities in Cape Town were doing much for returned soldiers and almost nothing for those who worked in the war factories and on the home front. For instance a 1,367,970 pounds scheme for the erection of 1,224 dwellings for returned soldiers and 43 farm holdings at "Q" Town was recommended by the City Council for acceptance by the finance committee.<sup>(2)</sup> Provision was also made for a sports field and pavillion costing 10 000 pounds, a creche and clinic (12,000 pounds), street works (315,500 pounds), layout of grounds (12,670 pounds), and preliminary expenses (10,000 pounds).<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. Cape Argus, 28/05/1946.

2. Cape Argus, 27/06/1945.

3. Ibid.



In addition to that, the Housing Committee also planned 78 flats at Maitland and a further <sup>h</sup>sc<sub>A</sub>eme for flats at Durban-road, Mowbray, for ex-volunteers.<sup>(1)</sup> This shows that the local authorities in Cape Town were racist in their approach towards solving the housing problem which affected almost all sections of Cape Town's population.

After 1948, when the Nationalist Party government came to power, the situation in Cape Town as far as housing was concerned had already moved from bad to worse. The policies enforced by the government and the resistance which ensued led to the persistence of squatting which was in part a consequence of recurring housing shortages and poor wages among Black people. "With the change of government in 1948, the Cape Town City Council's plans for African housing were forced to change considerably. The question had originally been one of the provision of cheap family accommodation in Langa for Africans from Windermere; the Nationalist government was however strongly opposed to there being a settled African population in the Western Cape, indeed they looked to the time when Africans could be excluded entirely from the area. The focus therefore became the provision of family accommodation only for "legal" families, the definition of which became increasingly narrow while most accommodation was to house "bachelors"."<sup>(2)</sup> Many Africans who

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1. Cape Argus, 27/06/1945.

2. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.60.

lived in squatter camps and elsewhere in the city, were included in this category whether they were married or not.

Between 1948 and 1953, whilst the government was busy formulating its policy towards African urbanisation, the City Council embarked on a programme which would allow it to proceed with the construction of housing for both Africans and Coloureds. The City Council applied for a loan of 106,025 pounds to build 1048 huts at Langa and 470 at Retreat. The huts cost 75 pounds to produce but had no floors, water, lights or toilets.<sup>(1)</sup> The scheme was condemned by African organisations and Vigilance Associations as "extending and legalising the pondokkie system".<sup>(2)</sup> From the perspective of these organisations which was put before the Minister of Native Affairs by deputation, the answer to the problem of housing lay in the betterment of wages paid to working people. The living conditions of most Black people therefore, reflected all the disadvantages inherent in their socio-economic position.

Towards the end of 1953, the government's plans for African housing were outlined. Langa was to be reserved for "bachelors", accommodating approximately 17,000 of them.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. City of Cape Town: Annual Reports of the Town Clerk, 1950.

2. Guardian, 06/04/1950.

3. Cape Times, 11/02/1953.

Whereas, a Site and Service camp in Nyanga location was set aside to house all 'legal' families.<sup>(1)</sup> So the City Council of Cape Town received an amount of money estimated at about 135,960 pounds which was to help in the building of hostels for "bachelors" in Langa Township.<sup>(2)</sup> The scheme, even though not completely acceptable to the City Council, was welcome because it represented a step out of the crisis. Whereas the ANC condemned the scheme which it regarded as part of deliberate efforts to block the development and organisation of the African proletariat in urban areas.<sup>(3)</sup> From the perspective of the government, the movement of all "bachelors" to Langa; all 'legal' and 'semi-legal' families to Nyanga, would assist in the further screening of 'illegals'. Stricter influx control measures were therefore applied. A number of raids were carried out among the squatter communities all over the Peninsula, especially in such areas as Windermere, Bellville, Goodwood, Matroosfontein, etc.. As a result, between June and December 1953, about 1500 people were prosecuted in the Native Commissioner's Court.<sup>(4)</sup> Raids continued to occur throughout

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1. Cape Times, 11/02/1953. (Information supplied by Swart, C.C.)
2. Advance, 29/07/1954. (Information supplied by Kinkead-Weekes, B.)
3. New Age, 27/01/1955 (Information supplied by B.Kinkead-weekes)
4. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', pp.65-69.

December 1953 and the following year, leading to ANC protests.<sup>(1)</sup> These raids, superficially appeared to be directed against 'illegals' and 'bachelor' squatters who were being forced to move to the 'bachelor' quarters in Langa. But underneath, they were indeed, part of a national war the white racist regime had declared against Black people, especially during this period. This was the period when the Nationalist government was attempting to assert the totality of its power over all aspects of life of Black people, in particular.

By the end of 1955, there were reports that about 25,000 'bachelors' had been moved from Windermere to Langa.<sup>(2)</sup> Again in 1958 there were claims that between 10,000 and 12,000 "bachelors" had been moved from Windermere to Langa.<sup>(3)</sup> This increased the population of Langa from 7,168 men in February 1953 to 19,710 men in December 1959.<sup>(4)</sup> Not all 'bachelors' and 'illegals' complied with the authorities and moved to Langa or out of the city. Mr Mbude who lived in the slum conditions in Roger Street in Cape Town in 1953 represents the resistance offered by some 'bachelors' to forced removal.

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1. Cape Times, 14/12/1953, 19/06/1954. (Also cited in Swart, C.C., p.67).

2. Cape Times, 24/06/1955.

3. Cape Times, 25/11/1957, 11/08/1958.

4. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', pp.65-69.

He refused to go back to Lady Frere in Transkei when the city authorities were forcing him to leave Cape Town after he had been ill and out of work for some time. He argued with them "I was not born in Transkei", and the city councillor said, "What! It is indicated in your pass that you were born in Transkei", Mr Mbude replied "I was not born there, I was born on earth", "Where?", the councillor asked, "Here in Africa, I cannot be buried alive"<sup>(1)</sup> Mr Mbude stayed in the city until he was imprisoned by the police. Many of the people who resisted like him continued to squat in the bushes, very hidden from view. This shows that all these measures by the government failed to bring to an end the problem of squatting.

In 1955 it became clear that for 'legal' and 'semi-legal' African families, "accommodation facilities beyond those the Divisional Council could provide in Nyanga emergency camp were required. The central government therefore pressurised the Cape Town City Council into establishing an emergency camp at Nyanga West",<sup>(2)</sup> today called Gugulethu Township. It was only in July 1958 that the Council started constructing an infra-structure for the area.<sup>(3)</sup> In the meantime, "African

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1. Interview with Mr Mbude, Nyanga East, October 1990.
2. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.69.
3. City of Cape Town: Annual Report of the City Engineer, 1958, p.20. (Also cited in Swart, C.C.), p.69.

families were to be accommodated in prefabricated hutments".<sup>(1)</sup> According to the plan of the City Council, families from Windermere were to be the first ones to be moved to Nyanga West after completion and "thereafter families from such areas as Retreat and Athlone"<sup>(2)</sup> would follow. Removals from Windermere were under way in 1959, and in the middle of that same year, a number of families estimated to about 930 had been moved to Nyanga West.<sup>(3)</sup> About 1281 families, 521 of whom were 'legal' and 760 of uncertain status were accommodated in Nyanga West in February 1960.<sup>(4)</sup>

Having explained some of the aspects involved in the response of authorities to the plight of squatters I will now focus on the activities of welfare organisations. The most important of these were the Cape Flats Distress Association (CAFDA) and the Friends of Windermere's Association. (Of course there were other organisations like SHAWCO who worked alongside the Cape Flats Distress Association and Friends of Windermere Association. But in this chapter I will only focus on the

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1. Swart, C.C.: 'Windermere: from Peri-urban Area to Suburb (1920s to 1950s)', p.70.
2. Ibid.
3. Cape Times, 18/06/1959, 04/09/1959. (Also cited in Swart, C.C.), p.70.
4. Cape Argus, 03/02/1960.

latter two organisations). These organisations were the result of the efforts of people who were touched by the plight of pondokkie dwellers around the city. The Cape Flats Distress Association for instance was formed of such people in 1944. One of the tasks the Association set itself was to enlist public opinion to urge that the recommendations of the Cape Flats Commission of 1942 with regard to housing, clinics, health services, drainage and other amenities be put into immediate operation. For immediate relief the Association aimed at providing coffee stalls, soup kitchens, and clothing depots and arrange for a travelling clinic.<sup>(1)</sup> The Association operated particularly in the low-lying swampy area in Grassy Park, Retreat, and Vrygrond areas of the Cape Flats as well as in the squatter areas of Windermere. Other important tasks <sup>h</sup> <sub>A</sub> which the Association tackled in these areas involved pressing for night soil removal, feeding and keeping squatters warm, as well as looking after children whose parents were working.<sup>(2)</sup> Big achievements made by CAFDA took place in their Windermere branch. The Kensington Students' Committee, built an excellent clinic with spacious accommodation for the Cape Flats Distress Association. The clinic also housed the Union of Jewish Women's creche, (which cared for approximately 100 children) offices, store room, etc. Community sporting activities such as wrestling, boxing,

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1. Cape Argus, 20/06/1944.

2. Cape Flats Distress Association, Annual Reports, 1945, 1946, 1948.

physical culture, ballet, etc were all started by CAFDA.<sup>(1)</sup>  
In Windermere and Vrygrond, where exorbitant prices were paid by the people for water, CAFDA was able to persuade the municipality to install four water taps in Windermere and one in Vrygrond.<sup>(2)</sup>

Just like the Cape Flats Distress Association, the Friends of Windermere's Association was also born of the socially concerned people. Its attention was also focussed on the shocking conditions at Windermere where it was clear that there was little visible evidence of the improvements which health authorities had said were vitally necessary to safeguard the city from the festering sore from its outskirts. The Association erected an office of two rooms at Windermere; one occupied by a full-time social worker employed by the Association, the other by a Board of a Social Welfare Office.<sup>(3)</sup> In March 1945, "the Association placed 269 inhabitants of Windermere in positions as house maids, nurse girls, charwomen, houseboys and gardeners".<sup>(4)</sup> The Association's social worker in his report for March 1945, said that clothing and blankets would be made available to meet the needs of the people during winter. What we have

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1. CAFDA, Annual Report, 1953
2. Ibid.
3. Cape Times, 25/04/1945.
4. Cape Times, 25/04/1945.



outlined above summarises the nature of welfare activities provided by voluntary associations among squatters. Even though they were not designed to bring any fundamental changes in the conditions of squatters, their value cannot be dismissed.

In broad terms the responses of the authorities and the wider community of Cape Town to the plight of squatters, represented a failure to redress past inequalities occasioned by decades of exploitation and oppression. They failed to solve the problem of peri-urban squatting because it was intricately linked with broader national political and economic problems which themselves needed to be solved. Structural advantage versus structural disadvantage which defined the position of Blacks and whites was the central problem during this period and it persisted until today. All the problems related to this including peri-urban squatting have continued.

For the position of squatters, their appalling living conditions during the period of this research, the white community could not escape the blame for apathy and neglect of people who lived under those conditions. It shows how falacious it would be for Black people living in these conditions today to again expect a privileged community to bring solutions. Scores of thousands of pounds of rate payer's money between 1945 to 1960 was spent on beautifying

and increasing the amenities of white suburbs. Yet there was not enough money to spare in order to drain Windermere, which yearly was overflowed, or provide enough medical facilities for the disease-stricken inhabitants of pondokkies around the city. This shows how a people who have always defined themselves as 'civilised' are hardly worthy of the name because of their heartlessness and inhumanity.

## CONCLUSIONS

The political economy of peri-urban squatting around Cape Town during the period 1945 to 1960 is a broad and complex issue. This thesis does not pretend to have comprehended all the aspects involved; instead it emphasises some of the most salient issues, some of which have not been adequately dealt with in the already existing historical works. The literature review in the first chapter helped to focus my ideas firstly, on the very nature of political economy, but more importantly, on the political economy of peri-urban squatting. All existing local histories of squatting, it appears, highlight similar factors; viz., poor wages paid to the Black working-class majority, high subsistence costs in the cities, racial legislations and policies of the government, as fundamental to the origins, growth or development of squatting around South African cities. In chapter two, I took these points further by making reference to the issue of imperialism as an important factor underlying developments in the political economy of this country. What the chapter demonstrates is that the economy of South Africa during the period 1945 to 1960, was not only capitalistic, dominated by local, private, industrial capital but also exhibited features of imperialism, represented by giant multi-national corporations which emerged during this period as net importers of capital through surplus appropriation. Besides that, the competition which occurred between various

forms of capital affected the wages of Black working-class people. This is demonstrated in chapter three by examining the wage rate between races during the period 1945 to 1960. On the whole the argument in chapter two is that serious structural weaknesses occurred in the South African economy due to competition with foreign capital and as a result it was incapable of meeting the needs of all its members. Those not designated 'European' or 'white', under the South African political system suffered most. Hence the housing problem during the period 1945 to 1960, was a Black problem and pondokkie dwellers were predominantly Black people. This expressed the combined effect of political oppression and economic exploitation which makes the issue of race and class inseparable. Some of the issues in chapter two are particularised in the third chapter which examines the political economy of Cape Town. This chapter touches on various issues to show that even though Cape Town cannot be isolated from broader structural contradictions characterising our social formation, it had its own inflections which help to define its specific conditions.

The thesis also identifies various squatter settlements around the Cape Peninsula during the period 1945 to 1960. This is done in chapter four. In the two chapters that follow the raw experiences of life in squatter camps are examined. Oral information is used to tap the subjective experiences of people who lived in these camps. In that way the thesis

transcends the mere political and economic issues. In the last chapter it focuses on the responses by various sections of the wider community of Cape Town to the plight of the squatters. It focuses mainly on the changing responses of the government and local authorities, as well as the activities of welfare organisations.

As is indicated in the introduction, it would not be enough to provide only an historical perspective into the origins, growth and forms of squatting in Cape Town during the period 1945 to 1960 and leave it there. There is a need to indicate approaches towards the solutions of the problem which even today confronts ~~the~~ South African urban society as a whole. Of course I am acutely aware of changes which have occurred over the past three decades. But in spite of that, the political and economic circumstances of the urban poor have not changed substantially. Some of the basic factors like poor wages, high subsistence costs in urban areas, racial legislations and policies of the state with regard to the occupation of land by Blacks in urban areas, have not all disappeared. Some still obtain in the present but in more revamped versions. This is clearly captured in Graham Howe's paper titled "Squatter Crisis" and a series of other works written and published in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>(1)</sup>

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1. Howe, G.: "Squatter Crisis", Occasional Paper No. 3, Centre for Inter-group Studies, UCT, 1982.

So the question remains as to what do historians, or scholars of history who have examined the local histories of peri-urban squatting, propose as an approach towards the solution of the problem of squatting as it exists today? Informed by a broad historical understanding, pragmatic considerations are also necessary when attending to this issue. At present, the solution of the plight of squatters and millions of other homeless people in this country lies first and foremost on the achievement of political democracy. This would serve its purpose only if it creates conditions for the evolution of a version of social democracy with a more radical approach to issues such as land redistribution, labour and human resources development, housing and social welfare.

It is self evident that until today, the supply of houses has never kept pace with demand and that this on the one hand, population increase, poor wages and growing unemployment, on the other, constitute the immediate causes of the squatter problem. It therefore needs a democratic state to establish conditions for the construction of low cost housing in some areas, by providing land and infra-structural services. These should be made available to community controlled non-profit housing development projects in order to encourage locally based housing initiatives. Of course this cannot adequately solve the problem unless the democratic state commits itself to the development of "a high employment, high wage, high productivity economy, with economically viable, competitive

enterprises".<sup>(1)</sup> But another factor which needs serious consideration is a mechanism of controlling the existing demographic trends which are already assuming explosive heights.

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1. 'Recommendations on Post-apartheid Economic Policy' in Transformation, Vol. 12, 1990, p.10.

#### A NOTE ON SOURCES

The main primary sources used in this thesis include, Industrial Censuses, Population Censuses, Health Statistics taken from the Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health (Cape Town), newspapers and oral information. There were a variety of problems encountered with the use of all these sources. But the major problems were with the Census records, especially population censuses. The problem was with the definition of Cape Town which changes over the census periods. In the 1946 Census, for instance, Cape Town was defined to include the Cape and Wynberg Magisterial Districts and the majority of Black people who worked in Cape Town stayed in squatter camps some of which were not in the Cape or Wynberg. Besides that in the 1951 census the definition of Cape Town included not only the Cape and Wynberg but also Belville. This change influences the figures very remarkably. This leads one into questioning their reliability. In fact J.L. Sadie, in his paper titled "An Evaluation of Demographic Data Pertaining to the Non-white Population of South Africa" also questions and puts under scrutiny the reliability of the census data for entire 'non-white' population group in South Africa. He points out that most of the census data pertaining



to them is incomplete as it is based largely on inference.<sup>(1)</sup> He criticises the 1946 and 1951 population census data pointing out that "it is patently impossible for births to be fewer than their survivors".<sup>(2)</sup> He used as an example the census conducted among Indians in South Africa during these years. Even if the problem raised by Sadie explains a broad situation it cannot be assumed to be completely irrelevant when dealing with the more regional and local population statistics.

In the Industrial Census the problem is that figures given to indicate Black wage rates, only show average wages. This creates problems in itself because variations in wage structure between 'Non-European' groups are disguised and different levels of skill are not reflected.

The health statistics for Africans in Cape Town also have a number of gaps. Some of the years like 1953, 1954 and 1957 have no statistical records to show the number of deaths due to diseases like tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia, etc. The problem is even worse when it comes to squatter

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1. Sadie, J.L.: "An Evaluation of Demographic Data Pertaining to the Non-white Population of South Africa", South African Journal of Economics, Vol.38, (1970), Part 1 and Part 2.
  2. Ibid., p.2.

communities. In the reports of the Medical Officer of Health (Cape Town), the record of deaths due to diseases like tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia, diarrhoea and gastro enteritis only appear for Windermere up to 1949. After this date no records of death were made except for the year 1954. Of course this must not be interpreted to mean that people all of a sudden stopped dying of these diseases but it reflects the impact of apartheid on medicine.

Packard argues in his 'White Plague, Black labour', that in the 1950s and early 1960s the incidence of tuberculosis, for instance was still on the rise throughout South Africa.<sup>(1)</sup> Even though he does not refer to the specific case of the Western Cape one can assume that the situation cannot be completely different from the rest of the country. If there was any decline in the number of deaths from either tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia or gastro-enteritis, it was not absolute, as the health statistics lead us to believe.

Oral sources used in this thesis have no problems except that they are few and in that way the voice of squatters in the writing of their history is limited. Besides that, many of my

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1. Packard, R.M.: White Plague, Black Labour, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1989.

informants were old, uneducated people and therefore had problems in remembering the actual dates of events.

My newspaper research included largely the Cape Times and Argus. Very little is said in these newspapers about the forms of resistance by squatters against interference by external authorities and forced removals. But other newspapers like New Age, Guardian, Advance, etc. do mention a lot about incidents of resistance.

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# APPENDIX

INTERVIEWER : K.M. KONDLO  
INTERVIEWEE : MRS. G. JAFTA  
NO. OF CASSETTE : 1  
TRANSLATOR : HLONELA LUPUWANA  
TRANSCRIBER : NYAMEKA NONGWE

Q: What is your name?

A: My full names are Gladys Jafta.

Q: What year were you born?

A: I was born in 1938.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Ekhowa, this place called Elliot.

Q: Oh - Elliot...Elliot is under South Africa by the way?

A: They say its Transkei.

Q: Whom are your parents?

A: I was born of Wayer (my father) Mdondose...my mother is Emma Ndondose.

Q: How many are you at your home?

A: At home we are 7.

Q: How many girls?

A: There are 5 girls and 2 men.

Q: Are you a first born at your home or not?

A: I'm the first born.

Q: All come after you?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh I see. What year did you start schooling?

A: Is started in 1947, in the countryside. I came here while I was still doing subA, we were staying in Bellville.

Q: Oh! You were staying in Bellville?

A: Yes in a place called Moflei.

Q: Slowly, what year did you came here in Cape Town?

A: In Cape Town I came in 1945 and I had grown up a bit.

Q: Yes.

A: I was grown up a bit, but my parents say they came here when I was seven.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, but others were both here.

Q: They were born here in Cape Town. Here in Cape Town where did you stay on your arrival?

A: My father was already staying in Elsie's River in another whiteman's place, he had his own room there...we stayed there but towards the end of the year we went to stay in Bellville.

Q: Oh in Bellville?

A: Yes in a place called Moflei, there was a big 'plaas' (farm) in which apparently Afrikaners were staying.

Q: Oh...

A: Apparently in this plaas (farm) there were 8 rooms so each person has a room for his kids.

Q: And for his kids?

A: Yes.

Q: Was your father working for those Afrikaners?

A: My father was working here in Elsie's in the place in which we were staying, we stayed 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 schooling in Parow in a Moslem School.

Q: You were schooling in Parow?

A: Yes at Moslems...49, 50 we came to a location called Marabastad here in Parow...between Parow and Elsie's. We stayed in that location, maybe we stayed 50, 51, 52, and 53 when the 'passes' started.

Q: In what type of houses did you stay?

A: In shacks (oophondoki).

Q: Oh...you were staying in shacks, with whom?

A: With coloureds, it was a mix.

Q: The place was called Marabastad?

A: Yes the name of the place.

Q: How did you stay in this place on your arrival, did you first go to ask for permission or did you just build your shack?

A: No we didn't just build the shacks without permission. There was one man who was a major and who gave people sites.

Q: What was his name?

A: I can't remember his name but his clan-name was "Mqwathi" I can't remember his name, we rented R2,00 a month...

Q: Renting R2,00, to whom?

A: We rented to him but I think there was someone he was representing, I don't know whether he was representing a Moslem or what but representing someone. Infact he was employed by that person, I am not sure whether its a Moslem or a Coloured. In 1955 an inspector came in the houses demanding 'passes'...we didn't even know what passes were...people were arrested. We were taken to Woodstock not very far from Observatory, we took photos for passes, we were still school children then.

Q: Yes.

A: That was 55, it was 56...our houses had black crosses. At the end of 56 people were taken to Nyanga...

Q: Where were these black crosses put, and what for?

A: The black crosses signified that one who had a black cross had to go...

Q: Had to go?

A: Yes...those who didn't have the crosses yet, their turn was coming, so these crosses were put I think in 5 rows.

Q: Where were people required to go to?

A: To Nyanga, and build shacks there, in Nyanga it was in Maumau and old location alone.

Q: To erect tents/shacks there at Nyanga?

A: Yes.

Q: Was Mau-mau a shack area that time?

A: Not Mau-mau, do you see this place at KTC?

Q: Yes I see it.

A: You see the shop there, it was a shop that was supported by us - from the North of KTC going further up towards NY.5 next to the graves, that place was called Kraaifontein...

Q: Oh! called Kraaifontein...

A: Yes towards the "Donkey Church" which is no longer there now...

Q: Yes I see...

A: Those were temporals for people from Elsies, Bellville etc.

Q: So you had to destroy your shacks and move to new area?

A: Yes.

Q: You did not destroy them because you had to leave Cape Town?

A: No...

Q: Destroying them because you had to move to another area?

A: Yes, we were moved to another place.

Q: What did they say is the reason for moving people there?

A: It was said that - that place had been bought...

Q: That it had been bought, by whom?

A: I don't know but it was said that it had been bought. The other men refused to move at first but were told that the place had been bought so they can't stay there - a place for Black people was to be in another area, we went to that smoky place in that chimney in a forest which is smokey because of cement work...

Q: All this time coloureds were left behind to stay there?

A: We left the coloureds there.

Q: Only black people were moved?

A: They only moved us black people.



Q: Were there only black people staying there?

A: There were black people only and no coloureds, the only coloured who was there was a woman who was married to a black person.

Q: I see!

A: We stayed there until the end of 1958, my father (my husband) went home. My pass was an exemption - together with my husband we had some rights here in Cape Town, no one between us had helped each other to get rights but each one of us had his/her own rights.

Q: You had your own right to be in the city?

A: My husband went home...stayed for a year in the countryside. On his coming back, when we went to the office, there was a red stamp in his pass which was apparently stamped there in the countryside. At the office they asked him about the stamp. So he told them that he's from the countryside. They found out that he's been there for quite some time for a period of a year, and the other one said "Yes that's true, why did you spend a whole year there?" My husband said, "I had not gone home. I had spent 45 years here so it was my first time to go home after then". So they stamped a red stamp on his pass.

Q: So that he should leave?

A: You had to leave because your rights have been terminated you can't stay for a year in the countryside you should stay for six months...so you overstayed and thus have terminated your rights. They looked for me these whites because my pass was an exemption pass and could not be changed...

Q: It couldn't be changed?

A: Yes my husband went to Observatory Magistrate in connection with his pass issue, "This law had been passed in 1945 that you have to stay for a certain period in the countryside so if you stay for long, your rights terminate and you have to start from "A" trying to attain rights, start by going to the shacks if you have to get back rights of Cape Town." The Magistrate said to me that "If you let the office to see you pass they will spoil it, you should show it to the Boers only, if they demand it in the office you should say you don't have it". It was clear that the thing is becoming bad...we were here in Nyanga now...

Q: You were at Dutch now?

A: We were there at Dutch. It was clear now that the place to stay was becoming a bad issue. We were (my husband and I) told to destroy the shack - "destroy it and go where whiteman?" And the whiteman called Erasmus said, "Jy kan gaan waar jy wil" - Rasmus was saying this to me. I said "how can you say I must go anywhere, where can I go because my home is no longer in the countryside but here." The white man said "Jy kan in die bos gaan or waar jy wil there's nothing that I can do"...where is the pass?" I said I don't know I do not have it...they destroyed on the date that they had set - I can't remember the date but it should be the 19th of December the date we were to destroy and if not...

Q: In 59...

A: In 59..."If you do not destroy we'll see what to do about you" said Rasmus. When we woke up in the morning Rasmus' car was there next to a hill looking to see if we were destroying the shack or not, I told my husband that "Look this white man has come to stand there". My husband destroyed the shack, and packed the zinc and asked for a place to put up for that period because we could not go to my husband's home...we don't have money, the husband is not working. We went to NY.108 to another man we attended church with but our stay with them was not nice because there were many children, I had my children and besides 10 children are many to stay in a house. We stayed there for a couple of days, and because there were many children, the children were troublesome, and we left there and went to stay in a place called Brown now called "Zinyoka".

Q: Were there shacks even there?

A: We erected a shack, there were no shacks, there were just a few people, coloureds, so we erected a shack...we stayed for a week...on the second week the inspectors came with tractors and they destroyed everything...

Q: Destroying your shack?

A: All the black people's shacks.

Q: What did you say is this place that you stayed in?

A: "Ezinyoka" today but it was called "Brown" then...

Q: It was called Brown?

A: Yes.

Q: Whereabout is that place here in Cape Town?

A: Here at Landsdowne Road beyond Nyanga East, there was a shop where we used to buy at.

Q: Did you stay with coloureds there?

A: We stayed with coloureds but they were a little bit far from us. The coloured township was not near to ours, but not very far because we used to go there and fetch water, but when inspectors came to destroy our shacks in the morning they came first to inform that they'll be coming. When they came they didn't ask...they just towed down all the shacks with a tractor, they did that until sunset...

Q: Were they destroying black people's shacks?

A: Our shacks...they went away round about 5, after they had gone, the men who didn't go to work - there were many of them. They again built and built...one just built just a place to stay for a while, we stayed and the inspectors did not come the next day...we made and built our houses bigger. We stayed like that - building...destroying...and so on.

Q: The inspectors would just destroy your shack even if you had legal rights to be in Cape Town?

A: When you have rights in some cases you wouldn't stay in shacks.

Q: Is it.

A: You would not be there, do you understand that?

Q: Yes I do understand.

A: The council whites came, Rasmus and others. They came with Schippers and took all of us everyone there to the police station. When Rasmus arrived at the police station he would just leave us there and give the books to the police. "Hey what it is, why are you here (this was said to me) I know you are Mr. Drati's child (my home was in Zwelitsha i.e. Nyanga East), what do you want here?" (one African policeman asked). I said, "No we have been collected as people staying in shacks..." "What happened to your house?" I explained. "No maan, your pass is okay, what then?" I told him that we are arrested because we stay in illegal shacks. My rights to be in the city have been cancelled but I

do not want to give them my book its been a long time that they are demanding it and telling me to go. "What about your old man?" (because my husband was older than me) and he explained the whole thing...they told him to go out. There was this police called Mobho who told us to go home. The Afrikaners came and took my pass - erase it and stamped a red stamp and my exemption ended. We moved from place to place and went back to the location.

Q: Which locator/township?

A: Here in Gugulethu in other people's shacks...we went to stay in one guy's shack at NY 150 - we stayed there for about three months but during weekends his wife became impossible. I wake up, go to work...come back and find the children everywhere because of this woman. My child of this age (pointing at an approximately six years child) I bought him/her a tricycle costing R69.00, I came back only to be told that it had been taken by this woman and put elsewhere, but she said she does not know that. From hearsay I found that she had sold it. We left there and went to stay at Ny.153, we moved there and stayed in Zwelitsha due to the pass issue...

Q: The pass issue...

A: Yes. People (home owners) did not want people who did not have passes to stay in their houses because even the owner would be arrested. We went to stay in Zwelitsha...but even there we stayed for a month the owner said no the inspectors are going to come, became people spy on each other. So we had to went back to Brown in the forest a place of illegal people.

Q: Was Brown situated in a forest?

A: Yes, it is the shop which is beside the road in Landsdowne road, we were staying behind the forest...we would go to work, come back and find that the houses have been destroyed, the children are everywhere, what's happening? You are told to destroy the shack because you have no right to be in Cape Town. We destroyed the shack and went to stay at my home because my parents had moved from Zwelitsha to Gugulethu, so I decided to go and stay there as I was tired of squatting.

Q: You went to the parents?

A: Yes, with my children and husband, we stayed there until we heard that people can build at KTC, now in 1986...we went to build there and stayed. The police

from time to time came to destroy our shacks but they ultimately stopped. We were not the only ones staying there, there were many of us - we erected tents now and again until they let us stay there...83, 84, 85...86 the was started at KTC...it was difficult. When I came back from work everyone was everywhere at NY 78...what's happening, what's the matter? I saw my children outside and houses were burning, what is it? We were being shot by Boers and "Witdoeke". The things inside our shacks were being taken out and put next to the road. I saw my house burning...my house was made of planks, it was a six roomed house...the fire was big...the house burnt down and we went to stay at my home again. It was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and now it was Saturday the 14th of June...My father (husband) sent my child - we were no longer staying in that burnt place, we were here next to garage which is next to Vokwana. This child was sent to Nyanga East a 16 year old child, he sent the child to one friend of his, they took the NY3 way - when they went up - still going towards the school named Dutch, one Boer appeared named Barnard by car...when he appeared - that Boer used to shoot children and the children would run...

Q: Was he shooting the children?

A: Yes, on his appearance he just shoots children and children would run, there were many children because my child was with his friends, I can't remember whether they were 5/6 when this Boer appeared, the children would run - my kid went to his direction (pointing) the Boer went to him and threw him down beat and shoot him to death, the people who saw the incident says he dragged him by the leg towards the road and stood on top of him - still firing on others.

Q: My God!

A: He fired on others (Barnard). His friends came to us - On their arrival they find me alone on a Saturday..."Ma this 'lighty' has passed away"... "Which lighty?" Keke (his name) "Oh! my children what are you telling me now?" Mother we've come to tell you that Keke has been shot dead by Barnard now not on any other day...I became stupid, I went outside and inside...These children were still here, they told me just this and stood - "What are you saying you children?" "No mother we've come to tell you that Keke has been shot by Barnard." "What happened?" We were just walking and Barnard came and we ran away, we helped ourselves by going towards New-crossroads, so he (Keke) towards the side which was burning...

Q: Yes.

A: "He took him". "I do hear my children, can you just go and tell his father at NY108 about this. On his arrival the father said we should go to the place in which he was shot. When the father arrived there he just saw blood and didn't see him so the people there at the stands (selling people) said "this child who was shot here was taken by this big police vehicles". My husband asked if he was still alive. The people said it did not look like but he was just restless. We went to the police station and we were told he was taken to the hospital. My husband saw the clothes that he was wearing because he was wearing a coat. My husband came home...they Afrikaners were supposed to arrive in the morning but they didn't. My husband did not want to go to the hospital so I had to go there with my husband's sister to the hospital, when we arrived at the hospital we were told that no such a shot person had been admitted. We went to the old mortuary and we were also told that no such a person was there, one girl said (which we came with) we should also phone Groote Schuur again, we were also told that such a person was not admitted there he went straight to the "emophini" this one didn't tell us, when we arrived home the father was sure that he is late so he went to "Emophini"...

Q: Emophini...what is that.

A: This place which keeps...the icy place which keeps dead place.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: When he arrived there at Salt River the husband was told that he's not there, it was Monday as he died on Saturday...My husband said they can't tell him that, my husband talked to this other policeman who was now with the mortuary/working in the mortuary...

Q: Who's this policeman?

A: Mbulelo...this black policeman...My husband saw him and said "Mbulelo, here I am nephew, my child has been shot and is dead, I can't find him in any of the hospitals, I was told that he is here and he is not here." Mbulelo said come you might find him these whites are lazy to check...my husband says they saw these tables in which people lie, they looked there and saw that its old people only so he can't be there. The policeman said you can have a look at those sleeping at the bottom shelf - he saw the feet covered by a plastic and suspected that its his child's - he saw that its him really...He also saw that he had no teeth anymore, so

he was sure that it's him and went home. We held the funeral at KTC. So I couldn't help the fact that I couldn't stay at KTC because each time I see that place where my child was killed...it becomes painful. So I suggested that it's better to find a place to stay at Site B...that's why we are here even now.

Q: The story you are telling me is painful, really painful.

A: There are many bad things whites have done to us. You see now I reported all this and we were told to go and write down the damages which happened at KTC...I wrote the issue of my child who was shot dead do you hear? Those who advised me to report this child because he was still young and still had to do many things for you." Right, we were called last month on the 16th of April and we were called to go and collect the money paid for damages...When I arrived there we were given 3 books/forms first to sign there at St. Joseph Stone...we signed these forms and we were told to go to one table and we were given a some of money, I was given R800.00 for my six rooms plus what was inside, we also went to one guy who was apparently a secretary. My husband said to him "I would like to know whether this money is for my destroyed house or for the death of my child?" This guy said "We only issue money for houses not for death of your child" How? My husband said. This white man said there's nothing that we can do, I can give an address where you can go to an attorney in town...and we went there. The attorney said there's nothing that I can do, by that R800.00 we were paying damages for the value of your house, although you were saying that the money is not even half for the value of your house. My husband asked if they cared for the damage of the house more than the death of his child. This white said you were supposed to have made two dockets, not one. You were supposed to make one for your damaged house and one for your child. My husband said if you say so it's you who are supposed to have made two dockets for me, because these people who are writing these are supposed to know this, so they are supposed not to have written one docket because they know this...how are we supposed to know this? This whiteman said that that does not concern him, but if we want to take further steps we can but he does not hope we'll ever succeed because there are many people who have lost their people's lives and further more they don't pay for damages of people who have died. On the other hand, that guy who was at St Joseph Stone showed us another form and checked it...he told us that that form was for people whose relatives were shot dead and that our child's name does not appear there and we gave up.

Q: What's bad is that these attorneys are also expensive and sometimes there's no sincerity or truth that you can get from them.

A: There's none.

Q: let me take you back in time, can you briefly tell of the time when you still grew up and still staying in the shacks of the things you did for youth entertainment?

A: For the youth?

Q: Yes, I mean things like concerts.

A: We did have them but we didn't go because my father was very strict so we didn't attend things like concerts.

Q: From what you heard, how did the youth entertain itself?

A: They attended parties...

Q: Even long time ago?

A: Even long time ago...they went to parties. The xhosas, because we stayed with Xhosas mostly...my father had an organ and you had to hire it out and people would make "Stockvel" and if my father was to go out they used to come and hire the organ and we would go with him. We would help him in beating tins or organ when he's tired.

Q: What song did he play?

A: Oh, I can't remember these old songs but he plays xhosa songs.

Q: Did he play xhosa songs and people danced?

A: They danced the xhosa way.

Q: The Xhosa dance.

A: Yes.

Q: In terms of churches, were there any churches in the shacks?

A: Yes, there were because one man staying next to us was Methodist.



Q: Those which existed were the Methodist, Presbyterian or what?

A: It was the Methodist which I took notice of because the services used to be held at Elsies as we were staying in Marabastad Matroosfontein road.

Q: Were there any churches in Marabastad like Zion, Shengu and Sxabhayi?

A: Sxabhayi and Zion were there.

Q: Were there many who attended Zion?

A: Yes, there were many because even of my father's home attended Sxabhayi so we used to help them prepare for their church Sxabhayi but we attended Zion because we didn't like Sxabhayi.

Q: Are you a member of the Zionist Church?

A: Yes.

Q: When did you join?

A: In 1953.

Q: Oh, you started in 1953. What exactly did you like with the Zionist Church?

A: I liked it because it brings us together.

Q: So that's what you liked most?

A: Yes, because my father did not allow us to attend other youth activities when other children come from school on Fridays they knew that on weekends they will go there and enjoy themselves. So we would stay at home, so we had no choice but to go to church. That was the only thing we could do because he didn't stop us from going to church, so we knew that on Saturdays we go to church.

Q: What time did the services start in church in the 1950's?

A: We started at 8.

Q: When would it end?

A: We ended it at 5 or 6.

Q: At 5! what did you do for such a long time?

A: Preaching.

Q: Preaching?

A: Yes for all that time preaching.

Q: Singing...

A: Singing, and preaching alternatively.

Q: Yes...how big was the membership?

A: Very big.

Q: When estimating how many were you?

A: I can't know, there were many people, a big house compared to that one of mine, it used to be full you would also multiply twice this lounge...

Q: Full of Zionist only?

A: Yes.

Q: By the time you moved to Dutch, were there any Zionist there?

A: We carried the Zionist spirit with us...Zionists are the people the community - there were no houses there on our arrival, the houses were built by us on our arrival. It was mostly the Zionist members who moved to that place, others attended other churches on Sundays and others of Saturdays.

Q: And there at Dutch you arrived and...?

A: We were the same thing.

Q: How did Zionist differ from Sxabhayi?

A: It differ according to the attire.

Q: Don't they wear uniforms (ukuvatha)?

A: No.

Q: Otherwise the teaching is the same?

A: I can say its the same because we have uniform and they don't, some things are common, others are not.

Q: Don't you have a song which you liked when you started attending the Zionist Church which you still remember?

A: Eeh...I have 107 Psalms.

Q: Oh is it taken from Psalms 107, how does it go?

A: It says "Give thanks to Jehova for he is righteous"

Q: Are you using it even now?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you distinguish between a song and a chorus?

A: What is a chorus?

Q: A song which is only about a paragraph, no long, but sung repeatedly.

A: Oh...

Q: Yes.

A: We do, you just take a small part from these Psalms songs.

Q: At Dutch were there Sxabhayi, Zion and Apostolic Churches?

A: All types of churches.

Q: What about the African Methodist Church?

A: African Methodist Church, Methodist, Anglican and all types.

Q: As a person who attends the Zionist Church are you allowed to visit a medicine man?

A: We do not believe in medicine men.

Q: You don't even believe in ancestors?

A: No.

Q: You only believe in God?

A: Yes.

Q: Let's finish by mentioning the names of places in which you stayed.

A: I went from Marabastad to Dutch - I came from Bellville and went to Marabastad and from there I came to Dutch which is now called KTC.

Q: KTC today?

A: KTC today, we are here now.

Q: You have helped me a lot, I think that I have got all the information I need, thank you mother.